TIPPOO SULTAUN.

VOL. I.

TIPPOO SULTAUN;

A TALE OF

THE MYSORE WAR.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "CONFESSIONS OF A THUG."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

WILLIAM NEWNHAM, ESQ.

MY BEST AND EARLIEST FRIEND IN INDIA,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE WITH GRATEFUL ESTEEM,

DEDICATED.

1361867

PREFACE.

THE favourable reception which the "Confessions of a Thug" have met with from the Public of England, has induced me to attempt a delineation of some scenes in the life of India's most celebrated character of latter times —Tippoo Sultaun.

While the events of the tale are in strict accordance with the history of the period, the scenery of the country is described from personal knowledge of its character; and there is scarcely a spot mentioned in these volumes, so far as India is concerned, of which the reality does not exist.

To that gorgeous land I am about to depart,

whence, if life and health are spared to me, I shall hope that I may be able, either through the medium of fictitious narrative or otherwise, to add my mite to the knowledge respecting those millions who own the sway of the people of England.

December 1, 1840.

TIPPOO SULTAUN.

CHAPTER I.

Towards the close of a day of intense heat, about the middle of the month of June, 1788, a party consisting of many persons might be seen straggling over the plain which extends southwards from the Fort of Adoni, and which almost entirely consists of the black alluvial deposit familiarly known in India under the name of "cotton soil."

The leader was a man perhaps about fifty years of age; he rode a powerful Dekhan horse

of great spirit, but whose usual fiery comportment was tamed by the severe exertion he had undergone, from the miry roads through which he had travelled the greater part of the day. Indeed he began to show evident symptoms of weariness, and extricated himself from every succeeding muddy hollow—and they were very frequent—with less power. His handsome housings too were soiled with dirt; and the figure of his rider, which merits some description, was splashed from head to foot.

It has been already stated that he was a man of advanced age. His face, which was wrapped up, as well as his head, in thick folds of muslin, in order to protect them from the scorching heat of the sun, showed a dark complexion much pitted with the smallpox; but his eyes were very large, and of that intense black which is but rarely seen even among the natives of India, and which appeared to flash with a sudden light when any stumble of his gallant horse provoked an impatient jerk of the bridle, and a volley of curses upon the mud and the road, if such it could be called. His dress was of cloth-of-gold,—a suit which had been once

magnificent, but which, soiled and tarnished as it was, he had chosen perhaps to wear as a mark of his rank, and thus to ensure respect from the people of the country, which might have been denied to money alone. It was open at the breast, and under the shirt of muslin worn within the alkhaluk, or upper garment, a broad rough chest could be seen,—a fair earnest of the power of him we describe.

A handsome shawl was girded around his waist, and his somewhat loose trowsers were thrust into a pair of yellow leather boots, which appeared to be of Persian workmanship. Over his shoulder was a gold belt which supported a sword; but this in reality was confined to the waist by the shawl we have mentioned, and appeared more for ornament than use. A bright steel axe with a steel handle hung at his saddle-bow on the right hand; and the butt-end of a pistol, much enriched with chased silver, peeped forth on the left, among the fringe of the velvet covering of the soft saddle upon which he rode. A richly ornamented shield was bound to his back by a soft leather strap passing over his chest; and the shield itself,

which hung low, rested between his back and the cantle of the saddle, and partly served as a support.

In truth, soiled and bespattered as he was, Abdool Rhyman Khan was a striking figure in those broad plains, and in his own person appeared a sufficient protection to those who followed him. But he was not the only armed person of the party. Six or seven horsemen immediately followed him,—his own retainers; not mounted so well nor dressed so expensively as the Khan himself, but still men of gallant bearing; and the party, could they have kept together, would have presented a very martial and imposing appearance.

At some distance behind the horsemen was a palankeen, apparently heavily laden; for the bearers, though there were as many as sixteen, changed very frequently, and could but ill struggle through the muddy road into which at every step they sunk deeply; nor did the cheering exclamations of those who were not under the poles of the palankeen appear to have much effect in quickening the pace of those who carried it; and it was very evident that they were

nearly exhausted, and not fit to travel much further.

In the rear of all was a string of five camels, which required the constant attention of the drivers to prevent their slipping and falling under their burdens; and with these were a number of persons, some on foot carrying loads, and a few mounted on ponies, who were the servants of the Khan, and were urging on the beasts, and those laden with the cooking utensils, as rapidly as it was possible to proceed in the now fast-closing darkness. Behind all were two led horses of much beauty, whose attendant grooms conducted them through the firmest parts of the road.

"Alla! Alla!" cried one of those mounted on a stout pony,—he was in fact the cook of the Khan,—"that I, Zoolficar, should ever have been seduced to leave the noble city of Hyderabad, and to travel this unsainted road at such a time of year! Ai Moula Ali," he continued, invoking his patron saint, "deliver us speedily from this darkness! grant that no rain may fall upon this already impassable road! I should never survive a night in this jungle. What

say you, Daood Khan—are we ever to reach the munzil*? are we ever to be released from this jehanum, where we are enduring torment before our time? Speak, O respectable man! thou saidst thou knew'st the country."

"So I do, O coward! What is the use of filling our ears with these fretful complaints? Hath not the munificence of the Khan provided thee with a stout beast, which, with the blessing of the Prophet, will carry thee quickly to thy journey's end? Was it not the Khan's pleasure to pass Adoni, where we might have rested comfortably for the night? and are we who eat his salt to grumble at what he does, when we saw that the Khanum† Sahib (may her name be honoured!) was willing to travel on? Peace, then! for it is hard to attend to thy prating and pick one's way among these cursed thorns."

"Well, I am silent," replied the other; "but my mind misgives me that we never reach the munzil, and shall be obliged to put up in one of these wretched villages, where the kafir inhabitants never kill meat; and we shall have

* Stage.

† Feminine of Khan; as Begum, feminine of Beg.

to eat dry bread, or perhaps dry rice, which is worse, after this fatigue."

"Ah, thou art no soldier, Zoolfoo," cried another fellow who was walking beside him, "or thou wouldst not talk thus. How wouldst thou like to have nothing for two days, and then perhaps a stale crust or a handful of cold rice, and be glad to thank the Provider of good for that,—how wouldst thou?"

"No more, I pray thee, good Nasur!" cried the cook, visions of starvation apparently overpowering him,—"no more, I beseech thee! Methinks thy words have already had a bad effect on the lower part of my stomach, and that it begins to reproach me for a lack of its usual sustenance. I tell thee, man, I can put to myself no idea of starvation at all. I was never able to keep the Rumzan (for which I pray to be pardoned), and am obliged to pay heavily every year for some one to keep it for me,—may grace abound to him! I pray Alla and the Prophet, that the Khan may strike off somewhere in search of a roof for the night."

The Khan had stopped: the increasing darkness, or rather gloom,—for there was still some-

what of daylight remaining, and the sun had not long set,—the muttering of thunder, and the more and more vivid flashes of lightning proceeding from an intensely black and heavy cloud which occupied the whole of the horizon before him, were enough to cause anxiety as to his proceeding further or not.

A hard or tolerably firm road would have relieved this, but the track upon which they journeyed became almost worse as he proceeded; and the man he had sent on some little way in advance, to observe the best passage for the horses, appeared to be guiding his with increased difficulty.

"I was an ass, and the son of an ass, to leave Adoni," muttered the Khan; "but it is of no use to regret this now:—what had better be done is the question. My poor Motee," he continued, addressing his horse, "thou too art worn out, and none of thy old fire left in thee. How, my son, wouldst thou carry me yet further?" and he patted his neck.

The noble beast appeared to understand him, for he replied to the caress by a low whinny, which he followed up by a loud neigh, and

looked, as he neighed, far and wide over the plain.

"Ay, thou see'st nothing, Motee; true it is, there is no village in sight: yet surely one cannot be far off, where, if they will admit us, we may get food and shelter. What thinkest thou, Ibrahim," he continued, addressing one of his retainers, "are we near any habitation?"

"Peer O Moorshid," replied the man, "I know not; I never travelled this road before, except once many years ago, and then I was with the army; we did not think much of the road then."

"True, friend," answered the Khan, "but now we have need to think. By the soul of Mohamed, the cloud beyond us threatens much, and I fear for the Khanum; she is ill used to such travelling as this, but she is a soldier's wife now, and I must teach her to bear rough work."

"The Palkee will be with us presently, and I doubt not the bearers well know the country, Khodawund," said another of the horsemen.

"True, I had not thought of them; perhaps when it arrives, it would be advisable to stop a

little to take breath, and then again set forward."

A few moments brought the bearers and their burden to where the Khan stood; and a few hurried questions were put to them by him as to the distance to the next village, the road, and the accommodation they were likely to find for so large a party.

"Huzrut!" said the Naik of the bearers, "you have but little choice; we did not think the road would have been so bad as this, or we would never have left the town or allowed you to proceed; but here we are, and we must help to extricate you from the difficulty into which we have brought you. To return is impossible; there is no village at which you could rest, as you know. Before us are two; one not far off, over yonder rising ground—my lord can even see the trees,—and another beyond that, about a coss and a half; to which, if the lady can bear the journey, we will take her, as there is a good bazaar and every accommodation. My lord will reward us with a sheep if we carry her safely?"

"Surely, surely," said the Khan, "ye shall have two; and we will travel a short stage to-

morrow, as ye must be tired. So what say you, my soul?" he cried to the inmate of the palankeen; "you have the choice of a comfortable supper and a dry lodging, or no supper and perhaps no roof over your head; you see what it is to follow the fortunes of a soldier."

"Let no thought of me trouble you," replied a low and sweet voice from the palankeen; "let the bearers and yourself decide, I am content anywhere."

"How say you then, Gopal?"

"Let us smoke a pipe all round, and we will carry you to the large village," replied the Naik.

"'T is well,—do not be long about it; I doubt not we shall be all the better for a short rest."

Fire was quickly kindled; every one dismounted from his beast, and all collected into groups. Tobacco was soon found, the hookas lighted, and the gurgling sound of half a dozen of them arose among the party.

A smoke of tobacco in this manner gives almost new life to a native of India. The trouble of the journey or the work is for awhile forgotten; and, after a fresh girding up of the loins,

and invocation of the Prophet or their patron goddess (as the parties may be Hindoo or Mohamedan), the undertaking is resumed with fresh spirit. After a short pause, the whole party was again in motion.

No one had however observed the extremely threatening appearance of the sky. The cloud, which had been still, now began to rise gently;—a few small clouds were seen as it were to break away from the mass and scurry along the face of the heavens, apparently close to their heads, and far below the larger ones which hung heavily above them. These were followed very quickly by others: the lightning increased in vividness at every flash; and what was at first confined to the cloud which has been mentioned, now spread itself gradually all over the heavens: behind—above—around—became one blaze of light, as it were at a signal given by a rocket thrown up from behind the cloud before them. In spite of appearances, however, they hurried on.

"It will be a wild night," observed the Khan, replacing and binding tighter the muslin about his head and face.

As he spoke he pointed to the horizon, where was seen a dull reddish cloud. To an unpractised eye it looked like one of the dusky evening clouds; but on closer and more attentive observation, it was clearly seen to rise, and at the same time to be extending right and left very rapidly.

"I beg to represent," said Daood Khan, who had come from behind, "that there is a group of trees yonder not far from the road, and, if my memory serves me well, there should be an old hut in it; will my lord go thither?"

"It is well spoken, Daood," said his master, "lead on."

There was no wind—not a breath—but all was quite still; not even a cricket or grasshopper chirped among the grass: it seemed as though nature could scarcely breathe, so intense was the closeness.

"Alla! Alla! I shall choke if there is no wind," said the fat cook, fanning himself with the end of a handkerchief.

"You will have enough presently," said Nasur.

"Inshalla!" exclaimed one of the camel-

drivers, "the Toofans* of the Carnatic are celebrated."

"Alas!" sighed the cook, and wished himself anywhere but in the Carnatic.

At last a low moaning was heard,—a distant sound, as if of rushing water. The rack above them redoubled its pace, and went fearfully fast: every instant increased the blackness on each side and behind. They could no longer see any separate clouds above, but one dense brown black ropy mass, hurrying onward, impelled by the mighty wind. Soon nothing was visible but a bright line all round the horizon, except in front, where the wall of red dust, which proved that the previous rains had not extended far beyond where they were, every moment grew higher and higher, and came nearer and nearer.

They increased their speed, to gain the trees, which were discernible a quarter of a mile before them. "Once there," said the Khan, "we can make some shelter for ourselves with the walls of the tents passed round the trees."

No one replied to him; each was thinking of the storm, and what would happen when it

* Storms.

came. The horses even felt the oppression, and snorted violently at intervals, as though they wished to throw it off.

At last, a few leaves flew up in the air: and some lapwings, which had been nestling under the stones by the way-side, rose and made a long flight to leeward with loud screamings, as though to avoid the wind.

One little whirlwind succeeded to another; small quantities of leaves and dry grass were everywhere seen flying along near the ground over the plain. The body of dust approached nearer, and seemed to swallow up everything in it. They anxiously watched its progress, in the hope that it would lessen in fury ere it approached them, for they could see the trees through the gloom against the bright line of the horizon, apparently at a great distance, disappearing one by one.

Meanwhile the roaring increased; the roar of the wind and that of the thunder were fearfully mingled together. Amidst this there arose a shrill scream from the palankeen; the fair inmate had no longer been able to bear the evident approach of the tempest.

The Khan was at her side in a moment. "Cheer thee, my rose!" he cried; "a little further and we shall reach a friendly grove of trees. The road is harder now, so exert yourselves," he continued to the bearers; "five rupees, if you reach the trees ere the wind is uponus!"

The men redoubled their pace, but in vain; they still wanted half the quarter of the mile when the storm burst. With one fearful flash of lightning, so as almost to blind them, and to cause the whole to stagger backward, a blast met them, which if they had withstood they had been more than men. The palankeen rocked to and fro, tottered under their failing support, and fell at last heavily to the ground. There was no mischief done, but it was impossible to proceed further; they must abide the storm where they stood in the open plain.

And now it came in pitiless earnest. As if the whole power of the winds of heaven had been collected and poured forth bodily upon one spot, and that where they stood,—so did it appear to them; while the dust, increasing in volume every instant, was so choking that no one dared to open his mouth to speak a word.

The horses and camels instinctively turned their backs to the wind, and stood motionless; and the men at last, forcing the camels to sit down, crouched behind them to obtain some kind of shelter from the raging storm.

Thus they remained for some time; at last a drop of rain fell,—another, and another. They could not see it coming amidst the dust, and it was upon them ere they were aware of it:—they were drenched in an instant. Now indeed began a strife of elements. The thunder roared without ceasing one moment: there was no thunder for any particular flash,—it was a continued flare, a continued roar. The wind, the rain, and the thunder made a fearful din, and even the stout heart of the Khan sunk within him. "It cannot last," he said;—but it did. The country appeared at last like a lake shown irregularly by the blue flare of the lightning.

Two hours, or nearly so, did they endure all this: the tempest moderated at length, and they proceeded. It was now quite dark.

"Where is Ibrahim?" asked one suddenly.

"Ay, where is he?" said another. Several shouted his name; but there was no reply.

"Ibrahim!" cried the Khan, "what of him? He must be gone to the trees; go, one of ye, and call him if he be there."

The man diverged from the road, and was soon lost in the darkness; but in a short time an exclamation of surprise or of terror, they could not say which, came clearly towards them. The Khan stopped. In another instant the man had rejoined them.

"Alla! Alla!" cried he, gasping for breath, "come and see."

"See what?" shouted the Khan.

"Ibrahim!" was his only reply, and they followed him rapidly.

They could hardly distinguish what it was that the man pointed out; but what appeared like a heap at first in the darkness, soon resolved itself into the form of a man and horse. The Khan dismounted and approached; he called to him by name, but there was no answer. He felt the body,—it was quite dead; horse and man had fallen beneath the stroke of the lightning.

"We can do nothing now," said the Khan. "Alas! that so good a man, and one who has

so often fought beside me, should have thus fallen! Praise be to Alla, what an escape we have had!"

"It was his destiny," said another,—"who could have averted it?"

And they rode on, but slowly, for the road was undistinguishable from the ground on each side, except where a hedge of thorns had been placed to fence in some field. Here those who were on foot fared very badly, for the thorns which had fallen, or had been broken off from branches, had mixed with the mud and sorely hurt their naked feet. The rain continued to pour in torrents; and the incessant flare of the lightning, which revealed the track, every now and then seemed to sweep the ground before them, nearly blinding both horse and man: it showed at times for an instant the struggles both were making in the now deeper mire.

They reached the smaller village at last; there were only three or four miserable houses, and in the state they were there was but little inducement to remain in want of food and shelter till the morning; so taking with them, much

against his inclination, one of the villagers as a guide whom they could understand, as he was a Mohamedan, and some rags soaked with oil tied on the end of a stick to serve as a torch, they once more set forward.

They had now scarcely three miles to travel, but these seemed interminable. The rude torch could not withstand the deluge of rain which poured upon it, and after a struggle for life it went out. There remained only the light of the lightning. The guide however was of use; now threatened, now encouraged by the Khan, he showed where the firmest footing was to be obtained, and piloted the little cavalcade through the almost sea of mud and water, in a manner which showed them that they would have fared but ill without his aid.

At last, O welcome sight! a light was seen to glimmer for awhile amidst the gloom; it disappeared, twinkled again, appeared to flit at a little distance, and was seen no more.

"What was that, Rahdaree*?" asked the Khan; "one would think it was some wild spirit's lamp abroad on this unblessed night."

* Guide.

"It is the village, noble sir," said the man simply; "we have no evil spirits here."

"Ul-humd-ul-illa! we are near our home then; it cannot be far now."

"Not a cannon-shot; we have a small river to cross, and then we reach the village."

"A river!"

"Yes, noble Khan, a small one; there is no water to signify."

But the Khan's mind misgave him. "It must be full," he said to himself, "after this rain; how can it be otherwise? every hollow we have passed has become a roaring stream; but we shall see. Ya, Moula Ali!" he exclaimed aloud, "I vow a gift to all the priests of thy shrine, if thou wilt protect me and mine through this night."

They had not gone much further before the dull sound of the river was heard but too plainly, even above the wind and the thunder, which now roared only at intervals. One and all were fairly terrified; and that there should be such an end to their really manful struggles through the tempest, disheartened them: but no one spoke till they arrived at the brink,

where through the gloom could be seen a muddy torrent rushing along with fearful rapidity.

"It is not deep," said the guide; "it is fordable."

"Dog of a kafir!" cried the Khan, "thou hast deceived us, to get us away from thy miserable village. By Alla! thou deservest to be put to death for this inhospitality."

"My life is in your hands, O Khan!" returned the man; "behold, to prove my words, I will venture in if any one will accompany me; alone it is useless to attempt it. Will no one go with me?"

But one and all hesitated; the gloom, the uncertainty and the dread of death alike prevailed.

"Cowards!" exclaimed the Khan, "dare ye not do for him whose salt you eat that which this poor fellow is ready to undertake because I only reproached him with inhospitality? Cowards and faithless! ye are worse than women."

"I am no woman or coward," said Daood Khan doggedly. "Come," he added to the guide, "as thou art ready to go, give me thy hand and step in, in the name of the Most Merciful!"

"Bismilla! Daood, thou hast a stout heart—I will remember thee for this. Step on, in the name of Alla and the twelve Imaums! Halloo when thou art on the other side."

They entered the water carefully, holding tightly each other's hand, and each planting his foot firmly ere he ventured to withdraw the other. The torrent was frightfully rapid, and it required all the power of two very strong men to bear up against it; but at length the shallower water was gained, and a joyful shout from the other side told to the Khan and his expectant party that the passage had been made in safety.

"Now make haste and get a torch, and bring some people with you," shouted the Khan; "meanwhile we will make preparations for crossing."

Not much time elapsed before a few persons were seen approaching the river's bank from the village, bearing several torches, which in despite of the wind and the rain, being all fed with oil, blazed brightly, and cast their light far and wide.

The Khan had been endeavouring to persuade

his wife to trust herself to his horse, instead of to the palankeen, in crossing the river; and after some representation of its superior safety, he had succeeded. She was standing by him closely veiled, when the torches appeared on the other side.

What she saw however of the stream, as revealed fully by the light, caused an instant change in her resolution: she was terrified by the waters;—and indeed they were very awful to look on, as the muddy boiling mass hurried past, appearing, as was the case, to increase in volume every moment.

"There is no time to lose," shouted the villagers, observing there was irresolution among the party; "the water is rising fast,—it will soon be impassable."

"The horse, the horse, my soul!" cried the Khan in despair; "the bearers will never carry you through that torrent."

"I dare not, I should faint in the midst; even now my heart is sick within me, and my eyes fail me, as I look on the waters," replied the lady.

"Khodawund!" said the Naik of the bearers,

"trust her to us; on our lives, she reaches the other side safely."

"Be it so then, Gopal; I trust thee and thy party; only land her safely, and thou shalt be well rewarded."

The lady again entered the palankeen; both doors were opened in case of danger. The stoutest of the bearers were selected, and the Naik put himself at the head. "Jey, Bhowanee!" cried one and all, and they entered the raging waters.

"Shabash! Shabash! Wah-wah! Wah-wah!" resounded from the villagers, and from the Khan's attendants, as the gallant fellows bore up stoutly against the torrent. Oil was poured upon the torches, and the river blazed under the light. The Khan was close behind on his gallant horse, which, snorting and uneasy, was very difficult to guide. There was not a heart on either bank that did not beat with almost fearful anxiety, for the water appeared to reach the palankeen, and it required the exertions of all the men to keep it and those who carried it steady.

"Kuburdar! kuburdar*! a little to the

* Take care! take care!

right!—now to the left!—well done! well done!" were the cries which animated and cheered them; and the passage was accomplished all but a few yards, when the water suddenly deepened,—the leading bearers sank almost up to their chests. Trials were made on either side, but the water was deeper than where they stood; the eddy had scooped out the hollow since Daood had crossed.

"Have a care, my sons!" cried the Naik, whose clear voice was heard far above the din. "Raise the palankeen on your shoulders. Gently! first you in front,—now those behind! Shabash! now let every man look to his footing, and Jey Kalee!"

They advanced as they shouted the invocation; but careful as they were, who could see beneath those muddy waters? There was a stone—a large one—on which the leading bearer placed his foot. It was steady when he first tried it; but as he withdrew the other, it rolled over beneath his weight and what he bore: he tottered, stumbled, made a desperate

* Take care! take care!

effort to recover himself, but in vain; he fell headlong into the current.

The palankeen could not be supported, and but one wild piercing shriek was heard from the wife of the Khan as it plunged into the water.

"Ya, Alla! Alla!" cried the Khan in his agony—for he had seen all—"she is lost to me for ever!" And throwing himself from his horse, encumbered as he was, he would have been drowned, but for one of the bearers, who supported him to the brink, and, assisted by the rest who immediately recovered the palankeen, bore him rapidly to the village.

CHAPTER II.

The confusion which ensued is indescribable. The few persons on the bank of the river rushed hither and thither without any definite object; and screams from some women, who had followed the men from the village out of curiosity, rent the air, and added to the wildness of the scene.

On a sudden an exclamation broke from a youth who stood not far off; and before they could turn to see what had occasioned it, he had darted from the spot and precipitated himself into the waters.

Cries of "He will be lost! he will be lost!" flew from mouth to mouth; and a dozen turbans were unwound and thrown to him from the brink, as he still struggled with the current,

supporting the slight and inanimate form of her who was supposed to have been swept down the stream at first.

Without waiting for a moment to answer the numberless queries which were showered upon him by the spectators, or to ascertain whether the senseless form he bore had life in it or not, he hastily covered the features from view; and, declining the assistance of some old crones who thronged around him, he pressed through them and hurried with the utmost rapidity to his home.

Those who partly carried and partly supported the Khan himself, conducted him to the chowrie or public apartment for travellers; and seating him upon such carpets and pillows as could most readily be found, they proceeded to divest him of his wet garments, arms, and boots, with an officious zeal, which, in spite of the protestations of his servant Daood, all persisted in exerting. The Khan suffered all patiently, apparently with almost unconsciousness, only at times uttering low moans and interjections, which showed his thoughts to be absorbed in the fate of her he deemed lost for ever. Gradu-

ally, however, the kind attentions of his servant, whose sobs could not be repressed as he bent over him in his attempts to remove his inner vest, which the others had hesitated to touch, recalled his wandering senses; and, staring wildly about him, he demanded to know where he was. Instantly, however, a fresh recollection of the scene which had passed flashed into his mind, and all the words he could find utterance for were an incoherent demand of Daood if the Khanum had been found.

"Alas, Peer O Moorshid!" was the reply, "your slave saw nothing; he assisted my lord here and——"

"Was she not instantly rescued? What were all of ye doing that she ever passed from your sight?" exclaimed the Khan. "Holy Alla! give her back to me or I shall go mad," he continued, starting up and rushing from the spot into the air, followed by his attendant and a few of the others who lingered about.

Distractedly the Khan hurried to the riverside, and in the misery of despair began to search for the body of his wife. He ran from place to place, shouting her name; he looked

everywhere for any trace of her remains, while his faithful attendant in vain besought him to withdraw from the spot, for that further search was unavailing. His words were unheeded: all the Khan saw, through the almost inky darkness, was the faint glimmer of the wild waters hurrying past him; and the only sounds he heard were their dull and sullen roar, above which arose the shouts of his servants on the other side, and at intervals a shrill neigh from one of the horses. Two or three persons only remained about the river-side, and these seemed unacquainted with what had occurred; all who had seen it had dispersed when the young man bore off the insensible girl he had rescued. After some time of fruitless search the Khan silently relinquished it, and sadly and slowly turned towards the village.

Meanwhile the young man we have mentioned carried the lady with the utmost speed he was able to his own home, a respectable house situated on the other side of the village from where the Khan was: without ceremony he entered the zenana, still bearing her in his arms, to the astonishment of an elderly dame, his

mother, and several other women, servants and others who happened to be there, and to whom the news of the disaster was being brought piecemeal, as first one and then another hurried in with parts of the story.

"Holy Prophet! what hast thou brought, Kasim Ali?" cried his mother;—"a woman! By your soul say how is this,—where didst thou get her?—wet, too!"

"'T is the Khan's wife, and she is dead!" cried many at once.

"I care not what she is," cried the young man; "by the blessing of Alla I saw her and brought her out of the water; she is still warm, and perhaps not dead; see what ye can do speedily to recover her. She is as beautiful as a Peri, and——but no matter, ye can do nothing while I am here, so I leave you."

Whatever Kasim's thoughts might have been, he had sense enough not to give them utterance; and, leaving the fair creature to their care, he again hurried forth, to see whether he could render further assistance to the unfortunate travellers.

Left among the women of the house, the

Khan's wife became an object of the deepest interest to these really kind people. Her wet clothes were removed; cloths were heated and applied to her body; she was rubbed and kneaded all over; the wet was wrung from her hair; and after awhile they had the satisfaction of hearing a gentle sigh escape her,—another and another at intervals.

"Holy Alla!" cried one of the women at last, "she has opened her eyes."

The light was apparently too much for them, for she shut them again and relapsed into stupor; but the respiration continued, and the alarm that she had died ceased to exist. Gradually, very gradually, she regained consciousness; and ere many hours had elapsed she was in a deep sleep, freed from all anxiety regarding her lord, whom on her first recovery she had presumed was lost.

The Khan and Daood had scarcely again reached the chowrie, when a large body of men with torches, shouting joyfully, approached it. Daood's heart leaped to his mouth. "She cannot have been saved!" he cried, as he advanced to meet them.

"Ul-humd-ul-illa!" cried a dozen voices, "she has, and is in the Patél's* house."

Without any ceremony they broke in upon the unfortunate Khan, who sat, or rather lay, absorbed in his grief. Alone, the memory of his wife had come vividly over him; and when he raised his head, on their intrusion, his wet cheek very plainly told that his manly sorrow had found vent.

"Ul-humd-ul-illa!" cried Daood, panting for breath.

"Ul-humd-ul-illa!" echoed Kasim.

"Do not mock me, I pray you," said the Khan sadly, "for grief is devouring my heart, and I am sad even to tears. And yet your faces have joy in them,—speak! she cannot live! that would be too much to hope. Speak, and tell truth!"

"Weep not, noble Khan," said Kasim; "she lives, by the blessing of Alla,—she is safe in my own mother's apartments; and such rude care as we can give her, or such accommodation as our poor house affords, she shall have."

The Khan started to his feet. "Thou dost

* The chief or magistrate of a village.

not mock me then, youth? Ya Alla! I did not deserve this! Who saved her? By the soul of the Prophet, any recompense in the power of Abdool Rhyman, even to half his wealth, shall be his who rescued her!"

"He stands before thee, O Khan!" cried Daood, who had recovered his speech; "it was that brave fellow who rushed into the water and rescued her, even while my lord was being carried hither."

In an instant rank and power were forgotten, and the Khan, impelled by his emotion, ere Kasim could prevent him, had folded him in a sincere and grateful embrace. Nay, he would have fallen at his feet, but the young Kasim disengaging himself prevented it and drew back.

"Not so, protector of the poor!" he cried; "your slave has but done what any man would do in a like case. Kasim Ali Patél would have disgraced himself had he turned from that helpless being as she lay in such peril on the bank."

The Khan was struck with admiration of the young man, who with excited looks and proud yet tempered bearing drew himself up as he

uttered the last words; and indeed the young Patél was a noble figure to look on.

He had not attempted to change his clothes since his rescue of the lady, but had thrown off his upper garment; he was therefore naked to the waist, and his body was only partially covered by the dark blanket he had cast over his shoulders. His tall and muscular frame was fully developed; and the broad chest, long and full arms, and narrow waist, showed the power which existed to be called into exertion when opportunity required. Nor was his countenance less worthy of remark. Although he had hardly attained manhood, yet the down on his upper lip and chin, which was darkening fast, proved that perhaps twenty years had passed over him, and added not a little to his manly appearance. His dark expressive eyes, which glistened proudly as the Khan regarded him, a high aquiline nose, large nostrils expanding from the excitement he had been in, exquisitely white and regular teeth, and, added to all, a fair skin—far fairer than the generality of his countrymen could boast,—showed that he was perhaps of gentle blood, which indeed

his courteous manner would have inclined most observers to determine.

"Thou art a noble fellow, youth!" cried the Khan, "and I would again meet thee as a brother; embrace me therefore, for by the soul of my father I could love thee as one. But tell me,—you saved her?—how?—and is she safe in your house?"

A few words explained all: the eddy in its force had cast the lady upon a bank below, almost immediately after her immersion, and fortunately with her head above the water. Had she not been terrified by the shock so as to lose her consciousness, she would have been able to drag herself upon the dry land, though she could not have got to shore, as part of the river flowed round the bank on which she had been cast. Thus she had continued in very imminent danger until rescued; for any wave or slight rise of the water must have carried her down the stream; and who in that darkness and confusion would ever again have seen her?

Gradually therefore the Khan was brought to comprehend the whole matter; and, as it

ought, his thankfulness towards the young Kasim increased at every explanation. It is not to be supposed, however, that he was the less anxious about her who had been saved; he had been with some difficulty restrained from at once proceeding to the Patél's house, and desisted only when Daood and his companion declared that such a proceeding would be attended with risk to the lady. She too had been assured that he was safe, they said; and in this comforting certainty, overcome by fatigue and excitement, she had fallen asleep.

"But that is no reason why my lord should not come to my poor abode," said Kasim; "this open room is ill suited to so damp a night, and my lord has been wet."

"I need but little pressing," he replied, and rose to accompany him.

Arrived at the house, which, though only a large cabin, was yet of superior extent and comfort of appearance to the rest in the village, the Khan found that every preparation the inmates had in their power had been made for him. A carpet was spread, and upon it was laid a comfortable cotton mattress; this was covered with

a clean fine sheet, and some very luxurious pillows placed against the wall invited him to repose.

Fatigue rapidly asserted its mastery over even the Khan's iron frame. He had been assured by Kasim's mother that his lady slept sweetly, and, an ample repast concluded, he attempted for a time to converse with the young Patél, but without much success.

The young man took in truth but little interest in the replies. The Khan himself was abstracted; sleep gradually overpowered him, and he sunk down upon the bedding in total unconsciousness after a short time.

After seeing him covered, so as to prevent the cold and damp coming to him, the young Patél left him to the care of Daood, and withdrew. His own bedding was in an inner room of the house, near to the apartments of the women, and his mother heard him gently pass to it, and joined him ere he had lain down.

"My blessing on thee, my brave boy!" cried the old lady, melting into tears at the mingled thoughts of what might have been her son's danger, and his gallant conduct; "my blessing

and the blessing of Alla on thee for this! thou art thy father's son indeed, and would that he were alive to have greeted thee as I do!"

"It is of no use regretting the dead now, mother: what I did I am glad of,—and yet I could not have done otherwise; though I thought of thee, mother, when I cast myself into the raging waters: thou wouldst have mourned if Alla had not rescued me and her.—But tell me," he continued, to avert the old lady's exclamations at the very thought of his death, "tell me, by your soul,—say, who is she? she is fair as a Peri, fair as a Houri of the blessed Paradise; tell me if thou knowest whether she is his wife, or—or—"

"His daughter, thou wouldst say, my son."

"Ay, why not?"

"I understand thy thoughts, but they must pass away from thee. She is no daughter of his. She hath but newly used the missee*; she must be his wife. Hast thou not asked the servants?"

"I have not, mother; but art thou sure of this?"

"I am."

* A powder which women apply to their teeth only after marriage.

"Then a bright vision has faded from my eyes," said Kasim despondingly: "the brightest vision I have yet seen in my young life. It seemed to be the will of Alla that she should be mine; for she had been lost to the world and to him, only that I saved her!"

"Forbid such thoughts," said his mother quietly, for she knew the fiery yet gentle spirit of the young man, and how easily she might offend where she only intended kindness. "She can be nothing to thee, Kasim."

"Her fate is with mine, mother: from the moment I was impelled to rescue her from the waters, I felt that my life was connected with hers. I knew not, as she lay on the sand-bank, that she was beautiful or young; and I could not have hesitated, had there been a thousand devils in my path, or the raging waters of the Toombuddra."

"Alas! my son," she replied, "these are but the fantasies of a young spirit. It was thy generous nature, believe me, which impelled thee to rescue her, not thy destiny."

But the young man only sighed; and after awhile, finding that her words had but little

power to remove the feelings which the events of the night had excited, she blessed him and retired to her repose.

Left to himself, Kasim in vain tried to court sleep to his eyelids. Do what he would, think of what he would, lie how he would,—the scene of the Khan's advance across the flood,—the waters hurrying by,—the rough eddies caused by the resistance to it made by the bearers, upon which the light of the torches rested and flashed,—their excited cries, which rung in his ears,—their every step which seemed before his eyes,—till the last, when all fell,—and then that one wild shriek! Again the despairing shout of the Khan, and the eager assistance rendered to him when he cast himself into the river,—the hurried search for the body, and the exertions of the bearers to raise the palankeen in hopes that it might be in it,—their despair when it was not,—the renewed search, for some moments unsuccessful,—then the glimpse of her lying on the bank, and his own efforts,—all were vivid, so vivid that he seemed to enact over again the part he had performed, and again to bear the lifeless yet

warm and beautiful body to his home with desperate speed.

"I saw she was beautiful, O how beautiful!" he said; "I felt how exquisite her form. I saw her youthful countenance,—hardly fifteen can she be,—and she the bride of that old man! Monstrous! But it is my destiny: who can overcome that? Prince and noble, the beggar and the proud, all have their destiny; this will be mine, and I must follow it. Ya Alla, that it may be a kind one!"

He lay long musing thus: at last there was a noise as though of talking in his mother's apartment. He heard a strange voice—it must be the lady's: he arose, crept gently to the door of the room, and listened. He was right: her pure, girl-like and silvery tones came upon his ears like music; he drank in every word with eagerness,—he hardly breathed, lest he should lose a sound.

He heard her tell her little history; how she had been sought in marriage by many, since he to whom she was betrothed in childhood had died: how her parents had refused her to many, until the Khan, whose family were neigh-

bours, and who had returned from Mysore a man of wealth and rank, hearing of her beauty had sought her in marriage. Then she related how grandly it had been celebrated; how much money he had spent; what processions there had been through the noble city of Hyderabad; what rich clothes and jewels he had given her; and how he was now taking her with him to his new country, where he was a soldier of rank, and served the great Tippoo. All this she described very vividly; and with the light-heartedness and vivacity of girlhood, but at the end of all she sighed.

"For all the rank and pomp, she is unhappy," thought Kasim.

Then he heard his mother say, "But thou sighest, Khanum, and yet hast all that ever thy most sanguine fancy could have wished for."

"Ay, mother," was the reply, "I sigh sometimes. I have left my home, my mother, sisters, father, and many friends, and I go whither I know no one,—no, not one. I have new friends to make, new thoughts to entertain, new countries to see; and can you wonder that I should sigh for the past, or indeed for the future?"

"Alla bless thee!" said the old lady; and Kasim heard that she had blessed her, and had taken the evil from her by passing her hands over her head, and cracking the joints of her fingers against her own temples.

"Thou wilt be happy," continued his mother; "thou art light-hearted for thine own peace,—thou art very, very beautiful, and thy lord will love thee: thou wilt have (may Alla grant many to thee!) children, of beauty like unto thine own; and therefore do not sigh, but think thou hast a bright destiny, which indeed is evident. Thy lord is young and loves thee,—that I am assured of, for I have spoken with him."

"With him, mother?"

"Ay, with him; he came a little while ago to the screen to ask after thee, and spoke tenderly: young, wealthy, and a soldier too, ah! thou art fortunate, my daughter."

"But he is not young, mother," she said artlessly. Kasim was sure there was regret in the tone.

"Why then, well," said the old lady, "thou wilt look up to him with reverence, and as every woman should do to her lord. But enough now;

thou hast eaten, so now sleep again. May Alla give thee sweet rest and a fortunate waking!"

Kasim heard no more, though he listened. His mother busied herself in arranging her carpet, and then all was still. He thought for awhile, and his spirit was not easy within him: he arose, passed through the outer chamber, where the Khan still slept, and his servants around him, and opening the door very gently passed on into the open air.

CHAPTER III.

It was now midnight, and the storm had passed away. In the bright heavens, studded with stars, through which the glorious moon glided, almost obliterating them by her lustre, there existed no sign of the tempest by which it had so lately been overcast. The violent wind had completely lulled, if indeed we except the gentlest breath, which was hardly enough to stir lazily here and there the leaves of an enormous Peepul-tree that occupied an open space in front of the Patél's house, and which else appeared sleeping in the soft light; while on every wet leaf the rays of the moon rested, causing them to glisten like silver against the sky. The tree cast a still shadow beyond, partly underneath which the servants

of the Khan and the bearers of the palankeen all lay confusedly,—so many inanimate forms, wrapped in their white sheets, and reposing upon such straw or other material as they had been able to collect, to protect them from the damp ground.

In the broad light, the camels of the Khan were sitting in a circle around a heap of fodder, into which every now and then they thrust their noses, selecting such morsels as they chose from the heap; while the tiny bell which hung around the neck of each tinkled gently, scarcely disturbing the stillness which reigned around. Beyond, the moonlight rested upon the white dome and minarets of the small village mosque, which appeared above the roofs of the houses; and the Hindoo temple also caught a share of her beams, revealing its curious pyramidical form at some distance, among a small grove of acacia trees. Far away in the east, the cloud which had passed over still showed itself,—its top glistening brightly against the deep blue of the sky: while from it issued frequent flickerings of lightning, which played about it for an instant and

disappeared; and a low and very distant muttering of thunder succeeded, showing that the tempest was still proceeding on its threatening yet fertilizing course. The cloud and the distance all seemed in one, for the light of the moon did not appear to illuminate much beyond Kasim's immediate vicinity.

He stood for a moment, and gazed around, and into the sky at the glorious orb. She looked so mild, so peaceful, riding in silence; whilst all around was so mellowed and softened by the blessed light, that, in spite of his habitual indifference to such scenes—an indifference common to all his countrymen—he could not help feeling that his heart was softened too.

The natives of India are perhaps heedless of natural beauties, but if there be any to which they are not indifferent, it is those of the glorious moonlights which are seen in the East, so unlike those of any other country. There, at almost every season, but particularly in the warmest, it is impossible for nature to supply anything more worthy of exquisite enjoyment than the moonlight nights; there

is something so soft, so dreamy, in the bright but silvery light, so refreshing, from the intense glare of the sun during the day,—so inviting to quiet contemplation, or to the enjoyment of society, with whomsoever it may chance to be,—that it is no wonder if the majority of Asiatics, both Mahomedans and Hindoos, should love it beyond the day, or appreciate more keenly the beauties it reveals. There, too, moonlight in those seasons has no draw-backs, no dangers; there are no dews to harm, nor cold to chill; and if there be a time when one can enjoy warmth without oppression, light without glare, and both in moderation, it is at the time of full moon in most months of the year in India.

After regarding with some feelings of envy perhaps the sleeping groups, Kasim sauntered leisurely towards the river's bank, his limbs mechanically obeying the action of his thoughts. The stream was still swollen and muddy, but it had subsided greatly, and the bank upon which the lady had been thrown was now no longer an island. Kasim walked there. "It was here," he said, "that she lay:

another moment, perhaps, and she would have been swept away into eternity! I should have felt for the Khan, but I should have been more at rest in my heart than I am now."

Kasim Ali, or Meer Kasim Ali, as he was also called, for he was a Syud, was the only son of the Patél of ——— ; indeed the only child, for his sisters had died while they were very young. His father was of an old and highly respectable family of long descent, which had won renown under the Mahomedan sovereigns of Bejapoor in their wars with the infidels of the Carnatic, and had been rewarded for their services by the hereditary Patélship or chief magistracy, and possession of one or two villages, with a certain per-centage upon the collections of the district in which they were situated. They had also been presented with some grants of land to a considerable extent, and the family had been of importance and wealth far superior to what it was at the period of our history. The troublous times between the end of the Bejapoor dynasty and the subsequent struggles of the Mahratta powers, the Nizam, and Hyder Ali, for the districts in which their possessions

lay, had alienated many of them, and caused them to pass into other and stronger hands.

The family however was still respectable, and held a good rank among those of the surrounding country. Syud Noor-ud-deen, the ather of Kasim, was much respected, and had at one time served under the banner of Nizam Ali in his wars against the Mahratta powers, and had been instrumental in guarding the south-western frontiers of his kingdom against their incursions.

But his death, which had occurred some years before the time of which we are speaking, had still more reduced the consequence of the family; and his widow and only son could not be expected to retain that influence which had resulted partly from the station and partly from the unexceptionable conduct of the old Patél.

Still there were many who looked forward to the rapid rise of the young man, and to the hope that he would in those stirring times speedily retrieve the fortunes of the house. On the one hand were the Mahrattas, restless, greedy of conquest; among whom a man who

had any address, and could collect a few horsemen together, was one day an adventurer whom no one knew,—another, a leader and commander of five hundred horse. On the other was the Nizam, whose armies, ill paid and ill conducted, were generally worsted in all engagements; but who still struggled on against his enemies, and in whose service titles were readily to be won, sometimes, but rarely, accompanied by more substantial benefits. Again, in the south, the magnificent power of Hyder Ali had sprung out of the ancient and dilapidated kingdom of Mysore, and bid fair, under his successor Tippoo, to equal or to surpass the others.

As Kasim Ali grew to manhood, his noble appearance, his great strength, skill in all martial exercises and accomplishments, his respectable acquirements as a Persian scholar, and his known bravery,—for he had distinguished himself greatly in several encounters with the marauders and thieves of the district,—had caused a good deal of speculation among the families of the country as to whose side he would espouse of the three Powers we have mentioned.

Nor was he in any haste to quit his village: naturally of a quiet, contemplative turn of mind, fond of reading and study, he had gradually filled his imagination with romantic tales, which, while they assisted to develope his susceptible temperament, also induced a superstitious reliance upon destiny, in which he even exceeded the prevailing belief of his sect.

His mother, who read his feelings, had repeatedly besought him to allow her to negotiate for the hand of many of the daughters of families of his own rank in the neighbourhood, and even extended her inquiries to those of the many partly decayed noble families of Adoni; but no one that she could hear of, however beautiful by description or high by birth or lineage, had any charms in the eyes of the young Kasim, who always declared he chose to remain free and unshackled, to make his choice wherever his destiny should, as he said, guide him.

It is not wonderful, then, that upon one thus mentally constituted, and whose imagination waited as it were an exciting cause, the events of the night should have had effects such as have been noted:—but we have digressed.

"Ay," thought Kasim, "her beauty is wondrous,—even as I saw it here by the light of the torches, as I wrung the wet from her long silky hair, and when, lifeless as she appeared, I laid her down by my mother,—it was very wondrous. What then to see her eyes open—her lips move—to hear her speak—to see her breathe, to see her move! and what to sit with her, beneath the light of a moon like this, and to know that she could only live for and love but one! to lie beside her on some shady terrace—to hear no sound but her voice—to drink in her words like the waters of the blessed well of Paradise—to worship her on the very knees of my heart! This," cried the enthusiast, "this would be Heaven before its time,—this, one of the seventy Houris, whom the Prophet (may his name be honoured!) has promised to the lot of every true believer who doeth his law. But I have no hope—none! What if the Khan be old, he is yet her lord, her lawful lord; and shall the son of Noor-ud-deen, that light of the Faith and brave among the brave, shall he disgrace his name by treachery to him upon whom he hath exercised

hospitality? No, by Alla, no!" cried the young man aloud, "I will not; better that I should perish than hold such thoughts; but, Alla help me! I am weak indeed."

And thus arguing with himself, exerting the better principle, which ever had been strong within him, Kasim returned to the house, entered it as gently as he had quitted it, and unknown to any one reached his chamber; there, soothed by his ramble in the calm air and the tone of his later reflections, he sank at last into slumber.

But his dreams were disturbed, as often follows exciting causes; and visions, now happy now perplexing, of the fair inmate of his house flitted across his mind while he slept; they were indefinite shadows perhaps, but he did not wake so calmly in the morning as he had gone to rest; and his heart was neither so light, nor his spirit so free of care, as before. Nevertheless he repeated the morning prayer with fervour, and commended himself to the blessed Alla, to work out his destiny as best he pleased.

It was late ere the Khan rose, for fatigue

had oppressed him, and he had slept heavily. It was reported to his anxious inquiries that the lady had arisen, bathed, and was well; nor could the Khan's impatience to behold once more one who was really dear to him be longer delayed. The apartment where his wife rested was made private, and in a few moments he was in her presence.

How thankful was he to see her well—nay, with hardly a trace of any suffering upon her! Her eyes were as bright, her smile as sunny and beautiful, as they had ever been. Her hair, which she had washed in the bath, and which was not yet dry, hung over her shoulders and back in luxuriant masses; and if its quantity, and the manner in which it was disposed accidentally about her face, caused her fair skin to seem paler than usual, it only heightened the interest her appearance excited.

"Alla bless thee!" said the Khan, much moved, as he seated himself by her,—for she had risen upon his entrance,—"Alla bless thee! it is more to Abdool Rhyman to see thee thus, than to have the empire of Hind at his feet. And thou art well?"

"Well indeed, my lord,—thanks to him who protected me in the tempest," she said, looking up devoutly; "and thanks too to her who, since I was brought hither, has not ceased to tend me as a daughter."

"Ay, fairest," said her lord, "what do we not owe to the inmates of this house, and indeed to all this village! without their aid we had been lost."

"I have an indistinct remembrance of some danger," said the lady; "I think I recollect the palankeen entering the waters, and their frightful appearance, and that I shut my eyes; and I think too," she added after a pause, and passing her hand across her eyes, "that it seemed to slip, and I shrieked; and then I knew nothing of what followed, till I awoke all wet, and the women were rubbing me and taking my clothes off. And then I remember waking again, and speaking to the kind lady who had so watched me; and I think I asked her how I had been brought here; but she made light of it, would not let me speak much, and so I went to sleep again, for I was weary. They said too thou wert well?—yet," she con-

tinued after a pause, "something tells me that all was not right, that there was danger. But my memory is very confused—very."

"No wonder, my pearl, my rose!" cried the Khan; "and how I bless that good lady for keeping the truth from thee! as thou wert then, the remembrance of it might have been fatal. And so thou dost not know that thou wert nearly lost to me for ever,—that I had seen thee plunged beneath that roaring flood, and little hoped ever to have been greeted by that sweet smile again?"

"Alas, no!" said the lady shuddering; "and was I indeed in such peril? who then saved me?—it was thou surely, my noble lord! and I have been hitherto unmindful of it," she cried, bowing her head to his feet; "how insensible must thou not have thought me!"

"Not so, beloved, not so," was the eager reply of the Khan as he raised her up; "I had not that happiness. I cast myself, it is true, into the waters after thee when the bearers fell, but it was useless. I should have been lost, encumbered as I was with my arms, only for the bearers who saved me. No, even as Alla sends visitations of evil, so does

he most frequently in his wisdom find a path of extrication from them; there was a youth—a noble fellow, a very Roostum, and by Alla a Mejnoon in countenance,—who saw the accident. His quick eye saw thy lifeless form cast up by the boiling water, and he rescued thee at the peril of his own life,—a valuable one too, fairest, for he is the son of a widow, the only son, and the head of the family,—in a word the son of her who has tended thee so gently—"

"Holy Prophet!" exclaimed the lady, "was I in this peril, and so rescued? At the peril of his own life too,—and he a widow's son, thou saidst? What if he had been lost?" And she fell to musing silently.

Gradually however (for the Khan did not hazard a reply) her bosom heaved: a tear welled over one of her eyelids, and fell upon her hand unnoticed,—another, and another. The Khan let them have their course. "They will soothe her better than my words," he thought, and thought truly.

After awhile she spoke again; it was abruptly, and showed her thoughts had been with her deliverer.

"Thou wilt reward him, noble Khan," she

said; "mine is but a poor life, 'tis true, but of some worth in thy sight, I know,—and of much in that of those I have left behind. My mother! it would have been a sore blow to thee to have heard of thy rose's death so soon after parting."

"Reward him, Ameena!" cried the Khan, "ay, with half my wealth, would he take it; but he is of proud blood and a long ancestry, though he is but a Patél, and such an offer would be an insult. Think—thou art quick-witted, and speak thy thought freely."

"He would not take money?" thou saidst.

"No, no,—I dare not offer it."

"Jewels perhaps, for his mother,—he may have all mine; thou knowest there are some of value."

"He would set no value upon them; to him they are of no use, for he is not married."

"Not married! and so beautiful!" she said, musing aloud.

"Nor to his mother," continued the Khan, who had not heard her exclamation,—"she is an old woman. No, jewels would not do, though they are better than money."

"Horses, arms,—they might gratify him, if he is a soldier."

"Ay, that is better, for he is a soldier from head to heel. But of what use would they be to him without service in which to exercise them? Here there are no enemies but plunderers now and then; but—I have it now," he continued joyfully after a pause,—"service! ay, that is his best reward,—to that I can help him. By the Prophet, I was a fool not to have thought of this sooner. He will be a rare addition to Tippoo's Pagha. I am much mistaken, too, in a few months, if he have an opportunity (and, by the blessing of the Prophet, it is seldom wanting against either the English or Hindoo kafirs), if he do not win himself not only renown, but a command perhaps like my own. Tippoo Sultaun is no respecter of persons."

"Ay, my noble lord, such an offer would be worthy of thy generosity and his acceptance," was the lady's reply: "and he could easily follow us to the city."

"And why not accompany us? I for one should be glad of his society, for he is a scho-

lar as well as a soldier, and that is more than I am. Besides one of my men fell last night, and his place is vacant."

"Fell! was drowned?" she exclaimed.

"No, my pearl, his hour was come; he fell by the hand of Alla, struck by lightning."

"Ay, it was very fearful," she said shuddering, "I remember that;—who fell, didst thou say?"

"Ibrahim."

"Alas! it was he that twice saved thy life."

"It was; but this was his destiny thou knowest: it had been written, and who could have averted it? What sayest thou, shall I offer the Patél the place?"

"Not Ibrahim's, since thou askest me," she said; "as he is of gentle blood, ask him to accompany thee; or say, 'Come to Abdool Rhyman at Seringapatam, the leader of a thousand horse,'—which thou wilt. Say thou wilt give him service in thine own risala, and hear his determination."

"Well spoken, my rose!" said the blunt soldier; "verily I owe him the price of thy glorious beauty and thy love, both of which were lost

to me, but for him, for ever. So Alla keep thee! I will not disturb thee again till evening, and advise thee to rest thyself from all thy many fatigues and alarms—Alla Hafiz!"

"A very Roostum! a Mejnoon in countenance," thought the fair creature, as, shutting her eyes, she threw herself back against the pillows; "a noble fellow, my lord called him, and a scholar,—how many perfections! A widow's son,—very dear to her he must be,—she will not part with him."

Again there was another train of thought. "He must have seen my face,—holy Prophet! I was not able to conceal that; he carried me too in his arms, and I was insensible; what if my dress was disordered?" and she blushed unconsciously, and drew it instinctively around her. "And he must have seen me too in the broad light when he entered this room: what could he have thought of me? they say I am beautiful." And a look she unthinkingly cast upon a small mirror, which, set in a ring, she wore upon her thumb, appeared to confirm the thought, for a gentle smile passed over her countenance for an instant. "What could he

have thought of me?" she added. But her speculations as to his thoughts by some unaccountable means to her appeared to disturb her own; and, after much unsatisfactory reasoning, she fell into a half dose, a dreamy state, when the scenes of the night before—the storm—the danger—the waters—and her own rescue, flitted before her fancy; and perhaps it is not strange, that in them a figure which she believed to be a likeness of the young Patél occupied a prominent and not a disagreeable situation.

CHAPTER IV.

It was now evening; the gentle breeze which came over the mimosa-grove loaded the air with the rich perfume of the blossoms. Cattle, returning from the distant pastures, lowed as they approached the village; and a noisy herd of goats, driven by a few half-naked boys, kept up an incessant bleating. Far in the west the sun had set in brilliancy; and a few light and exquisitely tinted clouds floated away towards the rocky range of the Adoni fortress, whose rugged outlines could be seen sharply defined against the sky. There were many beauties there, but they only remained to the living.

The grave of the Khan's retainer had been filled in, and the long narrow mound raised on the top: one by one, those who had attended

the funeral turned away and retired; but the Khan and Kasim, anxious to pay the last marks of respect to the deceased, staid till all had been smoothed down, and the place swept. Garlands of flowers were strewn upon the grave, —they left the dead to its corruption, and returned home.

But among soldiers, especially Asiatics,—whose belief in fatality, while it leads them to be often reckless of life, yet when a stroke of sorrow comes teaches them resignation—death makes perhaps but little impression, unless any one near or dear is stricken down. The Khan and his host, having partaken of the hearty meal supplied by the Patél, and most exquisitely cooked by the stout functionary we have before alluded to, and having each been supplied with that soother of many mortal ills a good hooka, had already almost forgotten the ceremony they had assisted in, and were well disposed to become excellent friends, and to detail to each other passages in their lives, which they would for ever have remained ignorant of but for the fortuitous circumstances in which they had been placed.

And it was after a recital of his own deeds, which, however modestly given, could not fail of having impressed Kasim with a high sense of his gallant conduct, that the Khan said, "My brother, I was an adventurer, as you might be; young and active, hairbrained perhaps, and ready for any exciting employment, with only my arms and an indifferent horse, I entered the service of Hyder Ali. You see me now the commander of a thousand horse, having won a reputation at the sword's point second to none in his gallant army. Why shouldst thou not have the same fate,—thou who hast personal attractions, greater power, and scholarship to aid thee—all of infinite value to an adventurer? What sayest thou then, wilt thou save him whom I serve,—Tippoo, the lion of war, the upholder of the Faith? Speak, O Patél, for I love thee, and can help thee in this matter."

"My lord draws a bright picture to dazzle mine understanding," he answered; "I have dreamed of such things, of attaining to giddy eminences even of rank and power; but they are no more, I well know, than the false visions

of youth, the brighter and more alluring as they are the more deceptive and unattainable."

"By my beard, by your salt, I say no!" cried the Khan; "I have said nothing but what is a matter of every-day occurrence in the army. What was Hyder's origin?—lower, infinitely lower than thine own. Thy ancestry was noble,—his can but be traced back a few generations, beginning with a Punjabee Fakeer, and descending (not much improved i' faith) to his father Hyder, whose mother was only the daughter of a cloth-weaver of Allund, somewhere by Koolburgah. It is destiny, young man, destiny which will guide thee—destiny which, on thy high and broad forehead, shines as brightly as if thy future history were already written there in letters of gold."

"My lord's words are enticing, very enticing," said the youth, "and ever have I felt that the inactive life I am leading was a shame on me in these times; but I like not the service of the Nizam, and the Mahrattas are infidels; I would not shame my faith by consorting with them."

"Bravely spoken! hadst thou come to Tippoo Sultaun mounted and armed as thou shouldst be,—even alone and unbefriended as I did to his father,—he would have enrolled thee upon handsome pay at once in his own Pagha*. With me, thou wilt have the benefit of a friend; and I swear to thee upon this my beard, and thy salt," cried the Khan generously, "I will be a friend and a brother to thee, even as thou hast been one to me, and her who is as dear to me as my own life's blood. I owe this to thee for her life,—for the risk of thine own, when we were nothing to thee, by Alla, but as the dust of the earth,—I owe it for thine hospitality; I desire thee for a companion and a friend; and, above all, my spirit is vexed to see one like thee hiding here in his village, and marring his own destiny by sloth and inaction. Dost thou think that service will come to seek thee, if thou dost not seek it?"

The young man felt the spirit-stirring address of the rough but kind soldier deeply, but he still hesitated: the Khan tried to guess his thoughts.

* Household troops.

"Dost thou think," he said, "that I have sweet words at my command wherewith to entice thee? Ay, that is my mistake, and I have spoken too freely to one who has never yet known contradiction nor received advice."

"Not so, not so, noble Khan, almost my father!" cried Kasim; "I beseech thee not to think me thus haughty or impatient. By your beard, I am not—I thought but of my mother—of the suddenness of this—of my own —"

"Poverty, perhaps," said the Khan; "do not be ashamed to own it. Thou wouldst go to service as a cavalier, as thou art, gallantly armed and mounted,—is it not so?"

"It is: I would not serve on foot, nor have I money to buy a horse such as I would ride into battle."

"Right! thou art right, by the Prophet, but let not this trouble thee. We spoke of thee this morning: we dare not offer thee money—nay, be not impatient—we dare not offer thee jewels, else both were thine. We could offer thee honourable service; and, if thou wilt accept it, as my brother thou art entitled to look to me thine elder, thou knowest,

for such matters as thou needest. With me are two horses, the best of the Dekhan blood, beside mine own Motee: him thou canst not have: but either of the others, or both, are thine; and if they do not suit thee, there are others at the city where thou shalt be free to choose. See, I have conquered all thy scruples."

The young man was much affected, and the Khan's kindness fairly brought the tears to his eyes. "Such service as I can do thee, O generous being," he exclaimed, "I vow here under mine own roof and by the head of my mother,—I will follow thee to the death. Such honourable service as I would alone have ever accepted is in my power, and I accept it with gratitude to thee and thine, whom the Prophet shield with his choicest care!"

"It were well that your arrangements were quickly concluded, for I cannot wait beyond tomorrow," said the Khan.

"It will be ample for my slender preparations," replied the youth. "I will break thi to my mother now."

"You do right, Meer Sahib; I honour thee

for thy consideration; and I too will to the Khanum: she will be glad to hear that her deliverer and her lord are now friends and brothers in service."

Kasim sought his mother; she was with her guest as he passed the door of the inner chamber; so he desired a girl who was without to inform his mother he desired to speak with her in his own apartment.

There was not much to tell her, and yet he knew that it would grieve the old lady. "But I cannot continue thus," he thought aloud; "the fortunes of our house have fallen, and the Khan's words bear conviction with them. I can retrieve them,—I may perhaps retrieve them I should rather say; and, after all, she will rejoice to hear of me, and the fortune and rank I shall, by the blessing of Alla, speedily win; and then—" but here his thoughts became quite inexpressible, even to himself; for there rushed suddenly before his imagination such a tide of processions, soldiery, elephants, wars, camps, as almost bewildered him; while here and there a figure mingled with all, which, had he been closely questioned, he must have

admitted was that of the fair Ameena. But his mother interrupted what we will say he was striving to put from him, by entering and standing before him.

"Thou didst send for me, my son," she said; "what news hast thou to tell? Was the Khan pleased with the Zeafut*? was the meat well cooked? By the Prophet, he hath a glorious cook; what dishes he sent into the Khanum, of which we have been partaking! By thine eyes, I have not tasted such since—since—"

But while the old lady was trying to remember when she had last eaten of such savoury messes as she spoke of, her son gently interrupted her, and said gravely, as he rose and seated her in his own place, "Mother, I have much to tell thee, so collect thy thoughts and listen."

She was attentive in a moment, and eagerly looked for what he should say,—with not a little apprehension perhaps, for there was sadness, nay even a quivering, perceptible in the tone with which he spoke.

* Entertainment.

Her grief was uncontrollable at first:—yet he gradually unfolded all his hopes—his previous determination to enter service when he could with honour—his desires for an active life—and his great chances of speedy advancement under the patronage of his friend;—and he laid them before his mother with a natural eloquence, under which her first sudden shock of grief fast yielded. Kasim saw his opportunity, and continued,—

"So much as thou lovest me, mother, wilt thou not have pride when I write to thee that I command men, that I have fought with the infidel English, that I have been rewarded, that I am honoured? Wilt thou not feel, and then say,—'If I had prevented him, there would have been none of this.' And doth it not behove every believer now to draw his sword in defence of the faith? Look around:—the English are masters of Bengal and Oude; they hold Mahamed Ali of the Carnatic and him of Oude in a base thraldom;—they thirst for conquest, and are as brave as they are cunning;—the Mahrattas have taken Hindostan and the Dekhan, and are every day making encroach-

ments upon Nizam Ali's power, which totters upon an insecure foundation;—and do not the eyes of every true believer turn to Tippoo, a man who has raised himself to be a monarch? I say, mother, I believe it to be my destiny to follow his fortunes: I have long thought so, and have eagerly watched the time when I should be able to join him. It has come, and dost thou love thy son so little, as to stand in the way of fame, honour, wealth, everything that is dear to me as a man, and as thy son?"

The old lady could not reply: but she arose and cast herself upon the manly breast of her son, and though she sobbed bitterly and long, yet at last she told him in accents broken by her emotion she was convinced that he was acting wisely, and that her prayers night and day would be for his welfare.

And her mind once being reconciled to the thought of parting with him, she made every preparation with alacrity. Such few garments as were necessary, and were the best among his not over-abundant stock, were put aside and looked over; and one or two showy hand-

kerchiefs and scarfs which she possessed, with deep gold borders to them, were added to his wardrobe. "I shall not want them," she said; "I am old, and ought not to think of finery."

Nor did Kasim neglect his own affairs; having made the communication to his mother, he at once sought the Kurnum, or accountant of the village, and disclosed his intentions to that worthy functionary. Though somewhat surprised at his sudden decision, he did not wonder at its being made; and, as he was a rich man, he liberally tendered a loan of money to enable Kasim to live respectably, until such time as he should receive pay from his new master. He dispatched a messenger for his uncle, his mother's brother, who arrived at night; and early the next morning he had concluded every arrangement for the management of his little property and the care of his mother.

These matters being arranged to his satisfaction, Kasim sought the Khan, with a light heart and sincere pleasure upon his countenance. He found him busied inspecting his horses, and greeted him heartily.

"Well," asked the Khan, "how fared you with the lady your mother after you left me?"

"Well, excellently well," was the reply; "she made some opposition at first, but was reasonable in the end."

"Good! then I have no blame on my head," he said laughing; "but tell me, when shalt thou be prepared?"

"Now, Khan Sahib, even now am I ready; speak the word, and I attend you at once."

"Why then delay, Kasim? Bismilla! let us go at once; the Khanum is well, and if thy good mother can but give us a plain kicheree* we will set off soon; the day is cloudy and there will be no heat."

"I will go bid her prepare it: and when I have put on some travelling garment better than this, Khan Sahib, and got out my arms, as soon as thou wilt we may be in our saddles. I am already impatient to see the road."

The meal was soon despatched by master and servant,—the camels loaded,—the horses saddled. No one saw the farewell Kasim took of his mother; but it was observed that his

* Rice and pulse boiled together.

cheek was wet when he came out of his house accoutred and armed,—a noble figure indeed, and one which drew forth an exclamation of surprise and gratification from the Khan.

CHAPTER V.

And in truth, accoutred as he was, and dressed in better clothes than he had hitherto worn, Meer Kasim Ali was one on whom the eye of man could not rest for a moment without admiration, nor that of woman without love. He wore a dark purple silk vest, bordered round the throat and openings at the chest with broad gold lace and handsome gold pointed buttons; a crimson waistband with a deep gold border was around his loins, in which were stuck several daggers of various forms and very beautifully chased silver handles; and on his shoulder was a broad gold belt or baldric, somewhat tarnished it is true, but still handsome. This supported a long sword, with a half basket hilt inlaid with gold and lined with crimson velvet; the scab-

bard was of the same, ornamented and protected at the end by a deep and richly chased ferule. At his back was a shield much covered with gilding and brass bosses.

"By Alla and the twelve Imaums," cried the Khan, "thou art worthy to look on, and a jewel of price in the eye of an old soldier. But there are the steeds,—take thy choice; the chestnut is called Yacoot*; he is hot, but a gallant beast, and perfect in his paces. The other I call Hyder, after him who was my first master; he is steadier perhaps, and not so active: say, which wilt thou have?"

"I think, with your permission, Khan Sahib, I will mount Yacoot;" and so saying, he approached him and bounded into the saddle.

"Alla, what a seat!" cried the Khan in an extasy of admiration, after Kasim had mounted, and the horse had made several wonderful bounds: "he does not move,—no, not a hair's breadth! even I should have been disturbed by that. Inshalla! he is a good horseman. Enough, Meer Sahib," he cried, "enough now; Yacoot is a young beast and a fiery devil, but

* Ruby.

I think after all he will suit thee better than the other."

"I think Yacoot and I shall be very good friends when we know each other better," said Kasim; "but see, the Khanum waits, and the bearers are ready. Put the palankeen close up to the door that it may be the more convenient," he added to them.

They obeyed; and in a few moments a figure enveloped from head to foot, but whose tinkling anklets were delicious music in the ears of Kasim, emerged from the threshold of the house, and instantly entered the palankeen. Another followed, and busied herself for a few moments in arranging the interior of the vehicle. This was Kasim's mother, whose heart, almost too full for utterance, had much difficulty in mustering words sufficient to bid her lovely guest fareweil.

"May Alla keep you!" said the old lady, blinded by her tears; "you are young, and proud, and beautiful, but you will sometimes think perhaps of the old Patélne. Remember all I have told you of my son; and that as the Khan is a father to him, so you are his

mother:—ye have now the care of him, not I. May Alla keep thee! for my old eyes can hardly hope to see thee again;" and she blessed her.

"Willingly, mother," she replied; "all that constant solicitude for his welfare can effect, I will do; and while I have life I will remember thee, thy care and kindness. Alla Hafiz! do you too remember Ameena."

The old lady had no reply to give; she shut the door of the palankeen with trembling hands, —and the bearers, understanding the signal, advanced, raised it to their shoulders, and bore it rapidly forward.

"Come," cried the Khan, who had mounted: "delay not, Kasim."

"Not a moment,—a few last words with my mother, and I follow thee."

She was standing at the door; he rode up to her and stooped down from the horse gently, "Thy blessing, mother, again," he said,—"thy last blessing on thy son."

She gave it; and hastily searching for a rupee, she drew a handkerchief from her bosom, and folding it in it, tied it around his arm. "My blessing, the blessing of the holy Alla and of

the Imaum Zamin be upon thee, my son! May thy footsteps lead thee into happiness,—may thy destiny be great. May I again see my son ere I die, that mine eyes may greet him as a warrior, and one that has won fame."

"I thank thee, mother; but saidst thou aught to her of me?"

"I told her much of thee and of thy temper from thy youth up: it appeared to interest her, and she hath promised to befriend thee."

"Enough, dear mother! remember my last words,—to have the trees I planted looked to and carefully tended, and the tomb protected. Inshalla! I will return to see them grown up, and again be reminded of the spot where I saved her life."

And so saying, and not trusting himself to speak to many who would have crowded around him for a last word, the young man turned his horse, and, striking his heels sharply into its flank, the noble animal bounding forward bore him away after his future companions, followed by the blessings and dim and streaming eyes of most who were assembled around the door of his mother's home.

The old lady heeded not that her veil had dropped from her face; there was but one object which occupied her vision of the many that were before her eyes, and that was the martial figure of her son as it rapidly disappeared before her. She lost sight of him as he passed the gate of the village: again she saw him beyond. There was a slight ascent, up which the party, now united, were rapidly advancing: he reached them. She saw him exchange greeting with the Khan, as he checked his bounding steed, fall in by his side, apparently in familiar converse, and for a short time more the whole were brightly before her, as a gleam of sunlight shone forth, glancing brightly from their spear-heads and the bosses on their shields, and upon the gay colours of their dresses. A bright omen she thought it was of the future. But they had now attained the summit. Kasim and the Khan disappeared gradually behind it; then the attendants—the palankeen—the servants—the camels,—one by one were lost to her gaze. Suddenly the place was void; she shook the blinding stream from her eyes, and looked again—but there was no one there; her son and his

companions had passed away,—she thought for ever. Then only, she perceived that she was unveiled, and hastily retreating into her now lonely and cheerless abode, for the while gave herself up to that violent grief which she had been ill able to repress as he left her.

"Ay, now thou lookest like a gentleman, as thou art in very truth," said the Khan, after they had ridden some miles. "What sayest thou, Meer Sahib, hast thou been instructed in the use of the arms thou wearest? Canst thou do thy qusrut*—use a mugdoor†—play with a sword and shield? and what sort of a marksman art thou?"

"As a marksman, Khan, I have pretty good practice at the deer which roam our plains and devastate our corn-fields; as to the rest, thou knowest I am but a village youth."

"Modestly spoken, Meer Sahib. Now take Dilawur Ali's matchlock, and kill me one of those deer yonder;" and he pointed to a herd which was quietly browsing at some distance: "we will put it on a camel, and it will be a supper for us."

* Gymnastic exercises. † A heavy club.

"I will try, Khan Sahib," returned Kasim joyfully and eagerly; "only stay here, and dismount if you will, lest they should see you; and if I can get within shot, thou shalt have the deer."

"Give him thy gun then," said the Khan to his retainer; "is it properly charged?"

The palankeen was put down, and all waited the issue with much interest and anxiety.

The Khan went to the palankeen. "Look out, my rose," he said; "I have dared the Patél to shoot a deer, and he is gone to do it. Look, see how he creeps onward, like a cat or a panther."

The lady looked out. It was very exciting to her to see the motions of the young man; and, if it may be believed, she actually put up a mental prayer for his success. "Ya Alla, give him a steady hand!" she said inwardly, and looked the more.

"He will be near them soon," said the Khan, shading his eyes with his hands; "there is a nulla yonder which will afford him cover; canst thou see? Mashalla! this is better than shooting one oneself."

"They have seen him!" cried the lady, as one of the deer which had been lying down got up and gazed warily about. "They will be off ere he can get within shot."

"Not so, by your eyes!" cried the Khan; "he has crouched down. See! raise thyself a little higher; look at him crawling."

Kasim's progress was slow, and had he been alone he would have given up the pursuit; but he knew the Khan was observing him, perhaps Ameena. It was enough,—he crept stealthily on.

"He will never get near them," said the fat cook. "Who is he—a village Patél—that he should shoot? Ay, now, at my city we have the real shooting; there, over the plains of Surroo Nuggur, thousands of antelopes are bounding with no one to molest them, except Nizam Ali, who goes out with the nobles and shoots a hundred sometimes in a day. I was once there, and killed——"

"With thy knife, O Zoolfoo, and roasted it afterwards I suppose," said Nasur: "don't tell us lies; thou knowest thou never hadst a gun in thy hand since thou wast born."

"That is another lie," retorted Zoolfoo. "By the beard of Moula Ali, if I was yonder I would have fired long ago: we shall have no venison for supper I see plainly enough. See how he is crawling on the ground as a frog would,—can't he walk upright like a man?"

"He knows well enough what he is doing, you father of owls," was the reply. "Inshalla! we shall all eat venison tonight, and thou wilt have to cook us kabobs and curries."

"Venison and méthee-ke-bajee make a good curry," mused the cook; "and kabobs are also good, dried in the sun and seasoned."

"Look! he is going to shoot," cried the Khan; "which will it be? I wager thee a new dooputta* he does not kill."

"Kubool! I agree," said the lady; "he will kill by the blessing of Alla,—I feel sure he will."

But Kasim's gun went down.

"He is too far off yet," she said: and he was. He saw a mound at a little distance from him, and tried to reach it, crawling on as before.

But the deer saw him. He observed their alarm, and lay motionless. They all got up and

* Scarf.

looked:—he did not move. The buck trotted forward a few paces, saw what it was, and ere the young man could get his gun to his shoulder as he lay, he had turned.

"I told you so," cried the Khan; "they are off, and I have won."

"There is yet a chance," said Ameena anxiously.

"I said he would not kill," said the cook; "we shall have no venison."

They were all wrong. Kasim saw there was no chance unless he rose and fired; so he rose instantly. The deer regarded him for an instant, turned as with one motion, and fled bounding away.

"There is yet a chance," cried Ameena again, as she saw the gun pointed. "Holy Alla! he has won my wager!" she added, clapping her hands.

He had, and won it well. As the herd bounded on, he waited till the buck was clear of the rest. He fired; and springing high into the air it rolled forward on the ground; and while it yet struggled, Kasim had drawn his knife across the throat, pronouncing the formula.

"Shookr Alla!" cried the cook, "it is Hulal* at any rate."

"Shabash!" exclaimed the Khan, "he has done it:—he is as good as his word,—he is a rare marksman. So thou hast won thy wager, Pearee †," he added. "Well, I vow to thee a Benares dooputta: thou shalt have one in memory of the event."

She would not, however, have forgotten it without.

"Go, some of ye," continued the Khan, "and take the lightest laden of the camels, for the Syud is beckoning to us: bring the game hither speedily."

The deer was soon brought, and laid near the palankeen, where the Khan stood. The bright eye was already glazed and suffused with blood.

"Ay, now thou canst see it," he said to the lady, who, closely veiled, yet had apertures for her eyes through which she could observe distinctly. "Is it not a noble beast?—fat, too, by the Prophet! It was a good shot at that distance."

"It was partly accident, Khan Sahib," replied Kasim.

* Lawful to be eaten. † Beloved.

"Not so, by your beard, not so, Patél; it was no chance. I should be very sorry to stand for thee to shoot at even further than it was."

"I should be very sorry to shoot at my lord, or any one but an enemy," he returned, "seeing that I rarely miss my mark whether on foot or on horseback."

"I believe thee," returned the Khan; "but where is that lazy cook?" he cried, after he had mounted.

"Hazir*!" cried Zoolfoo, urging on his pony from behind as fast as he could, for it shied at everything it saw. "Your slave is coming," he shouted, as the Khan grew impatient. And at last, joining his hands together, he was in his presence.

"Kya Hookum?" he asked, "what orders has my lord for his slave?"

"See that there is a good curry this evening; and if thou canst get méthee, put it in;—dost thou hear?"

"My lord and the Meer Sahib shall say they have never eaten such," said the functionary joyfully! "Inshalla! it will be one fit for the Huzoor himself."

* Present.

He fell back. "I thought," he said, "how it would be,—venison and méthee; yes, I had thought as much: my lord has a good taste." And the idea of méthee and venison comforted him for the rest of the day's journey.

And now the party rode on merrily, though not fast. The Khan became more and more pleased with his new friend every hour that they rode together. Kasim's stores of learning were not extensive; but so far as he possessed knowledge of books he unfolded it to the Khan. He recited pieces of Hafiz,—passages from the Shah Namah, of which he had read selections. He repeated tales from the Ikhlak-i-Hindee, from the Bostan, and ghuzuls* from the earlier Oordoo poets; until the Khan, who had never thought of these accomplishments himself, and who knew none who possessed them, was fairly astonished.

But after a few hours' ride they were near the village they were to rest at. "If thou knowest any one in it," said the Khan, "we shall be able to get a good place for the night."

* Songs.

"I know the Patél well, Khan Sahib; he was my father's friend. I will gallop on, and secure such a place as may be fitting for you and the Khanum to rest in."

When they arrived, they found the Patél with Kasim Ali ready to receive them at the door of a neat but small mosque which was in the village. A few tent walls were placed across the open part, to screen them from the weather and the public gaze,—then carpets spread; and soon some were resting themselves, while others wandered into the bazars or were employed in various offices for the Khan. Particularly the cook, who, after sending for a village butcher to skin and cut up the deer, selected some prime parts of the meat, which he proceeded to dress after the following fashion, and which we cordially recommend to all uninitiated.

The meat was cut into small pieces, and each piece covered with the ingredients for seasoning the dish, which had been ground with water to the consistence of paste. Then some butter and onions were put into a pan, and the onions fried till they were brown. Into this was placed

the meat, some salt, and sour curds or butter-milk: then it was suffered to simmer gently, while Zoolfoo every now and then stirred it with great assiduity. When it was partly done, the vegetables were added; and in a short time most savoury steams succeeded, saluting the hungry noses of a few lean and half-starved village dogs; these, attracted by the savour, prowled about with watering chops in the vicinity of the fireplace, much cursed by the cook, and frequently pelted with stones as they ventured a little nearer. Many kites were wheeling and screaming overhead, and a good many crows sat upon the nearest stones,—upon the wall and other slight elevations,—apparently, by their constant chattering and croakings, speculating upon their probable share.

"May your mothers and sisters be destroyed!" cried the cook, at length fairly perplexed between the dogs, the kites, and the crows, each of which watched the slightest inattention in order to attempt to carry off anything they could see: "may they be destroyed and dishonoured! Ya Alla!" he continued in exclamation, as he saw a dog coolly seize hold of and

run away with part of the leg of the deer, "Ya Alla! that is Jumal Khan's portion;—drop it, you base-born!—drop it, you son of a vile mother!" and he flung a stone after the delinquent, which had happily effect on his hinder portion, and made him limp off on three legs, howling, and without his booty. "Ha! I hit you, did I? that will teach you to steal!" and he picked up the meat.

"But, holy Prophet, I am ruined!" he again exclaimed. And indeed it was provoking enough to see several kites in succession making stoops at the little board upon which he had been cutting up the meat for the kabob; at every stoop carrying off large pieces, which, holding in their talons, they fairly ate as they sailed over him, screaming apparently in exultation.

"Holy Prophet! that I should have eaten such dirt at the hands of these animals. Ho! Meer Sahib!" he continued to Kasim who approached, "wilt thou keep watch here while I cook the dinner? for if thou dost not there will be none left; one brute had carried off this leg which I have just rescued, and while I was about that, the kites ate up the kabob."

The Syud could not help laughing at the worthy functionary's distress.

"Well, as there is no one near, Zoolfoo, I will sit here;" and he seated himself upon a log of wood not far from him. "Now we will see if any of these sons of unchaste mothers will come near thee: thou deservest this for what thou art doing for us there, which smelleth well."

"It is a dish for a prince, Meer Sahib," said the cook, giving the contents of the pot an affectionate stir. "I say it is a dish for the Huzoor, and such an one as I have often cooked for his zenana."

"Then thou wast in the kitchen of Nizam Ali?"

"Even so, Meer Sahib; there is plenty to eat, but little pay; so I left the Huzoor to follow the fortunes of the Khan,—may his prosperity increase!"

"Ay, he is a noble fellow, Zoolfoo, and a generous one;—see what he hath done for me already."

"Thou didst enough for him," said the cook drily. "Knowest thou that the Khanum is a bride, and that she is only fourteen or fifteen, and as beautiful as the moon at the full?"

"Is she?" said Kasim carelessly.

"Is she!" retorted the cook; "I saw her three months ago, for she was a neighbour of mine. I have known her for years, but that she does not know."

"Indeed! that is very extraordinary," said Kasim absently.

"Not at all," replied the cook; "my sister was servant in their house for some years,—nay, is there still. She told me all about this marriage; it was very splendid."

"Indeed!" said Kasim again.

"Ay, truly; and the maiden was very loth to be married to one so old. But she was of age to be married, and her parents did not like to refuse when such a man as Abdool Rhyman offered for her—Khan they call him, but he was only the son of a soldier of the Huzoor's—quite a poor man. They say—indeed Nasur told me—that he has two other wives át Seringapatam, but he has no child."

"That is very odd," said Kasim.

"Very," returned the cook. But their conversation was suddenly interrupted by one of the men, whoa pproached, and relieved Kasim of his watch.

CHAPTER VI.

They rested in the town of Bellary the next day; and as there was an alarm of parties of Mahratta horse being abroad, though they could hear of no one having suffered from them, the Khan, on account of the baggage he had with him, determined on travelling the eastern road by Nundidroog; from thence he could reach the city, either by Bangalore, or the western road, as best suited him. But no enemy appeared, though several alarms were given by the people.

At one place, however, after some days' travel, they heard that a party of horse had passed the day before; and at the stage after, they kept a watch all night,—with some need in

fact, for a marauding party of great strength were undoubtedly in their vicinity, as was plainly to be seen by the conflagration of a small village at some coss distant, which could easily be distinguished from the town wherein they rested for the night.

"This looks like danger," said the Khan, as from the tower in the middle of the village he and Kasim looked forth over the wide plain;—"the rascals yonder are at their old work. Strange, that there are none of our horse hereabouts to check them, and indeed I marvel that the rogues dare venture so far into Tippoo's country."

"If it were day we could see their number," replied Kasim; "as it is, we must take heart,—Inshalla! our destiny is not so bad as to cause us to eat dirt at the hands of those thieves."

"If I were alone, Kasim, I tell thee I would now put myself at the head of ye all, and we would reconnoitre that village; perhaps it may only have been a chance fire after all."

But soon after, one or two persons mounted upon ponies arrived, bringing the news that their village had been attacked in the evening; and that, after the robbers had taken all they

could, they had set fire to several houses and gone off in a southerly direction,—it was supposed towards Gootee.

"Our very road!" said the Khan; "but let us not fear: we had better travel on slowly, for it is probable that they have hastened on, and long ere this are beyond the pass. In that case there is but little fear of our overtaking them."

"I will stand by you and the Khanum to the death," said Kasim, "and that thou well knowest. They said there were not more than fifty fellows, and I dare say their fears exaggerated them one half at least. But if I might suggest anything, I would bring to your consideration the propriety of hiring a few young fellows from this village; they will be able to protect the baggage, and at least assist us should there be any danger."

"A good thought, Kasim; see thou to it when the dawn breaks—nay now, if thou canst find any. I will remain here and watch."

Kasim descended the tower, and at the foot found some of the very men he wanted; they were half-naked figures, sitting around the fire they had kindled: their heavy matchlocks

leaned against the wall, and their waists were girded round with powder-horns, small pouches filled with balls, and other matters necessary for their use. There were two or three armed with swords and shields, and the whole group had a wild and picturesque appearance, as the fire, upon which they had thrown some straw at the young man's approach, blazed up, illuminating the foot of the tower and the houses near it, and causing the shadows of the men to dance about in distorted figures. Two or three were sitting upon their hams, between whom a coarse hooka went its round, and was every now and then replenished; whilst the rest stood warming themselves over the blaze, or lounged about at no great distance.

"Salaam Aliekoom!" said Kasim, as he approached them; "say, which among you is the chief?"

"Aliekoom salaam!" returned one, advancing: "I am the Naik of these worthy men, say what you want; command us,—we are your servants. What see ye from the tower?"

"Nothing but the blazing village," said Kasim.

"The fellows have not left a roof-tree standing, they say," rejoined the Naik; "but the place was not defended, for the young men were all absent; and it is supposed the Mahrattas had news of this before they attacked it, —they are arrant cowards."

"You have found them so then?"

"We have,—we have twice beaten them off during the last few days, and killed one or two of them."

"Mashalla! thou art a sharp fellow,—what do they call thee?"

"Nursingha is my name; I am the nephew of the Patél."

"Good,—then what sayest thou, Nursingha, to accompanying our party for a few days, until we are well past the hills, or indeed to Balapoor; thou shalt have a rupee a day and thy food, and six of thy men half, if thou wilt."

"What say you, brothers?" cried Nursingha to the rest; "what say you to the stranger's offer? they seem men of substance, and they are the Government servants,—we can hardly refuse."

"What are we to do?" asked one.

"Fight, if there is necessity," said Kasim,—"canst thou do that?"

"There is not a better shot in the Carnatic than Lingoo yonder," said the Naik.

"He may shoot well and not fight well," returned Kasim.

"I never feared Moosulman or Mahratta yet," said Lingoo.

"Crowed like a good cock!" cried Kasim, "but thou art on thine own dunghill."

"I have fought with Hyder Ali many a time; and he who has done that may call himself a soldier," retorted Lingoo.

"Well, so much the better; but say, what will ye do? here are ten or twelve,—half that number is enough to protect the village, especially as the Mahrattas are gone on,—will ye come?"

"Pay us half our due here first," said the man, "and we are ready—six of us; have I said well, brethren?"

"Ay, that is it," cried several. "How know we that the gentlemen would not take us on, and send us back empty-handed, as the last did?"

"By Alla, that was shameful!" cried Kasim; "fear not, ye shall have half your money."

"Kasim, O Kasim Ali!" cried a voice from the top of the tower, interrupting him,—it was the Khan's, and he spoke hurriedly,—"Kasim, come up quickly!"

"Holy Prophet, what can it be?" said Kasim, turning to the tower, followed by several of the men. They were soon at the summit.

"What see you yonder?" asked the Khan, pointing to a light which was apparently not very far off.

"It is only a watchfire in the fields of the next village," said the Naik. But as he spoke there broke forth a blaze of brilliant light, which at once shot up to the heavens, illuminating a few clouds that were floating gently along, apparently near the earth.

"That is no watchfire," cried Kasim, as it increased in volume every moment; "it is either a house which has accidentally caught fire, or the Mahrattas are there. Watch, all of ye; if there are horsemen, the light will soon show them."

"There again!" exclaimed several at once, as a bright flame burst out from another corner of the village, and was followed by others,

in various directions. "It must be the Mahrattas, and yet none are seen!"

"They are among the houses," said the Khan; "they will not come out till they are obliged."

He was right; for while all were watching anxiously the progress of the flames, which they could see spreading from house to house, there rushed forth in a tumultuous manner from the opposite side a body of perhaps twenty horsemen, whose long spears, the points of which every instant flashed through the gloom, proved them to be the Mahratta party.

"Base sons of dogs!" cried the Khan; "cowards, and sons of impure mothers!—to attack defenceless people in that way—to burn their houses over their heads at night! Oh for a score of my own risala,—ay, for as many more as we are now, and those rogues should pay dearly for this!"

"Who will follow Kasim Ali?" cried the young man. "By the soul of the Prophet, we are no thieves, and our hearts are strong. I say one of us is a match for two of those cowards: who will follow me?"

"I!"—"and I!"—"and I!" cried several; and turned to follow the young man, who had his foot on the steps ready to descend.

"Stop, I command you!" cried the Khan; "this is no time to risk anything: look yonder,—you thought there were but twenty; if there is one, there are more than fifty."

They looked again, and beheld a fearful sight. The now blazing village was upon a gentle slope, hardly a mile from them; the light caused the gloom of night to appear absolute darkness. In the midst of this there was one glowing spot, upon which every eye rested in intense anxiety. Around the ill-fated village was an open space, upon which bright ground were the dark figures of the Mahratta horsemen in constant motion; while the black forms of persons on foot—evidently the miserable inhabitants, in vain striving to escape,—became, as they severally appeared, objects of fearful interest. Now many would rush from among the houses, pursued by the horsemen; several would disappear in the gloom, and they supposed had escaped; whilst others but too plainly fell, either by the spear-thrusts or under the sword-cuts of the

horsemen. They could even see the flash of the sword when the weapon descended; and sometimes a faint shriek, which was heard at an interval of time after a thrust or blow had been seen, plainly proved that it had been successful.

"By Alla, this is hard to bear!" exclaimed Kasim; "to see those poor creatures butchered in cold blood, and yet have no means of striking a blow in their defence!"

"It would be impossible for us to do any good," said the Khan; "suppose they were to come on here after they had finished yonder. I see nothing to prevent them."

"Inshalla! Khan, they will come; but what thinkest thou, Nursingha?"

"They owe us a grudge, and may make the attempt. Nay, it is more than probable, for they are stronger than ever, and they cannot reckon on your being here."

"We had as well be fully prepared," said the Khan; "have ye any jinjalls *?"

"The Patél has two," said a man.

"Run then and bring them here,—also what powder ye can find; bring the Patél himself

* Heavy wall-pieces on swivels.

too, and alarm the village. Kasim," he continued, "wait thou here; there is an apartment in the tower,—thither I will bring the Khanum, and what valuables we have with us. I do not fear danger, but we had better be prepared."

In a short time the Khan returned, conducting his wife; she was veiled from head to foot, and Kasim heard them distinctly speaking as they were coming up the stairs.

"Not there, not there!" said the lady; "alone, and in that dark place, I should give way to fears; let me ascend, I pray thee,—I am a soldier's daughter, and can bear to look on what men and soldiers can do."

"No, no, my life, my soul!" returned the Khan, "it is not fit for thee; if they should fire upon us, there will be danger; besides there are many men,—thou wouldst not like it; remember too I am near thee, and once the village is alarmed thou wilt have many companions."

"I am not afraid," she said; "I had rather be with men than women at such a time."

"Well, well, Ameena, rest thou here now at all events; should there be need thou canst join us hereafter."

The Khan a moment afterwards was on the top of the tower.

"Seest thou aught more, Kasim?" he asked.

"Nothing,—the village continues to burn, and the men are there; but either the people have escaped, or they are dead, for none come out now."

"Sound the alarm!" cried the Khan to some men below, who, bearing a large tambourine drum and a brass horn, had assembled ready for the signal. "If the horsemen hear it, it will tell them we are on the alert."

The deep tone of the drum and the shrill and wild quivering notes of the horn soon aroused the villagers from their sleep, and numbers were seen flying to the tower for refuge, believing the Mahrattas were truly upon the skirts of the village. The Patél was among the rest, accompanied by his family; he was soon upon the tower, and was roughly saluted by the Khan.

"Thou art a worthy man for a Patél!" cried he; "but for me, thy village might have shared the fate of that one yonder. Look, base-born! shouldst thou like to see it burning as that is?

Why wert thou not here to watch, O unfortunate?"

"I—I did not know—," stammered the Patél.

"Not know! well at any rate thou knowest now; but as thou art here, do something for thyself, in Alla's name. Where is thy gun, thy sword?"

"I can only use a gun, noble sir; and that perhaps to some purpose. Run, Paproo," he said to a man near him; "bring my gun hither. Now we are awake, the Khan shall see, if there is occasion, that we can fight as well as sleep."

"I had as well go down," said Kasim, "and prepare the men below: the women and children can get into the tower; those whom it will not contain must remain at the foot in these houses: it will be hard if any harm reaches them there."

In a short time all was arranged: the women and children, whose cries had been distracting, were in places of safety, and as quiet as the neighbourhood of the Mahratta horse, the sudden alarm, and the natural discordance

of their own language (the Canarese) would allow them; and on the summit of the tower about twenty men, for whom there was ample room, were posted, all well armed with match-locks. The two jinjalls were loaded, a good many men were stationed around the foot of the tower, and all were ready to give whatever should come a very warm reception.

The fire of the village burned lower and lower, and at last became only a dull red glow, with occasionally a burst of sparks. While they speculated upon the route of the horse-men, who had disappeared, a few of the wretch-ed inhabitants of the village which had been destroyed came running to the foot of the tower.

"Defend yourselves! defend yourselves!" they cried with loud voices; "the Mahrattas are upon you—they will be here immediately!"

"Admit one of them," said the Khan; "let us question him."

The man said he had passed the horsemen, who were trying to get across a small rivulet, the bed of which was deep mud; they had not been able to find the ford, and were searching

for it; but they knew of the village, were elated with success, and determined to attack it.

"They shall have something for their trouble then," said the Khan; "they know not that Abdool Rhyman Khan is here, and they will buy a lesson: let them come, in the name of the Most Merciful!"

"Away, some of ye!" cried the Patél to those below; "watch at the outskirts! and, hark ye, they will come by the north side,—there is an old house there, close to the gate,—when they are near, fire the thatch; as it burns, we shall be able to see and mark them."

"I thank thee for that," said Kasim; "now let all be as silent as possible. Listen for every sound,—we shall hear their horses' feet."

There was not a word spoken. Even the women were still, and the children; now and then only the wail of an infant would be heard from below. All looked with straining eyes towards the north side, and the best marksmen were placed there under the direction of Kasim.

"Thou art pretty sure of one," said the Khan to him; "I wish I could shoot as well as thou."

"A steady hand and aim, Khan Sahib;—do not hurry; if not the man, at least thou canst hit the horse. Inshalla! we shall have some sport."

"I had better take one of the jinjalls; the Feringhees (may they be accursed!) have sorely plagued us often by firing a cannon full of balls at us; so give me a few I pray. I will ram them down into the piece, and it will be less liable to miss than a single bullet."

"Mashalla! a wise thought," said Kasim, handing him some balls; and a scattered fire of praises ran from mouth to mouth at the Khan's ingenuity: "we shall now see whether we are to eat dirt or not."

They were now all silent for awhile.

"Hark!" said Kasim at length; "what is that?"

They all listened more attentively; the village dogs—first one, then all—barked and howled fearfully.

"They come!" cried the Khan; "I have

been too long with bodies of horse not to know the tramp."

"Now every man look to his aim!" cried Kasim cheerfully; "half of ye only fire. And you below, fire if you see them."

Almost as he spoke, they saw the light; at first they were uncertain whether the spies had fired the old house or not—it burned so gently; but by degrees the flame crept along the outside and round the edges; then it disappeared under the thatch, and again blazed up a little. The noise increased, though they could see no one in the gloom, but they could hear very distinctly.

"If one of those owls would but pull away a little of the old roof, it would blaze up," said the Patél. "By Crishna, look! they have even guessed my thoughts. Look, noble Khan!"

They saw one of the scouts advance from under the cover of some of the houses, and pull violently at one of the projecting rude rafters; and instantly the flame appear beneath.

"Another pull, good fellow, and thou hast earned five rupees!" cried the Khan in an ex-

tasy, as he held the butt of the wall-piece; "another pull, and we shall have a blaze like day."

It seemed as if the fellow had heard the Khan's exclamation, for he tugged in very desperation; they heard the roof crack; at last it fell in; and the sudden blaze, illuminating all around vividly, fell on the wild yet picturesque group which was rapidly advancing over the open space before the village.

CHAPTER VII.

The Mahratta horsemen did not perceive the snare which had been laid for them: they concluded that the fire was accidental, (and opportune, since it showed them the way to their plunder,) and on they came at a fast gallop,—fifty perhaps: wild figures they would have been deemed at any time,—how much more so, when, brandishing their long spears, and with loud shouts, they dashed forward! The light shone broad on their muffled faces and on the gay red housings of their saddles, and glanced from their spear-points and other weapons.

"Hurree Bōl!" cried the leader to his men, turning round on his saddle, and waving his sword, which all could see was dim with blood.

"Hurree! Hurree Bōl!" arose the cry from

fifty hoarse voices, which mingled with the quick trampling of the horses.

"Now!" cried the Khan.

"Wait one instant, for the sake of Alla!—let them come up," exclaimed Kasim.

They were close to the burning hut, when Kasim, whose matchlock had been steadily aimed, resting upon the parapet, fired. The leader reeled back in his saddle, waved his sword wildly in the air, and fell.

"Bismilla-ir-ruhman-ir—!" shouted the Khan; the rest of the invocation being lost in the loud report of the cannon. With it were the flashes and reports of a dozen other matchlocks; and as the smoke cleared away, they could plainly see four of the men on the ground struggling, and two or three others apparently badly hit supporting themselves in their saddles.

"Give me another gun, another gun!" cried Kasim; "there is no time to load. Another gun, I say! Will no one hand me one?" he continued, vainly endeavouring to load his own quickly.

"Do you not hear?" exclaimed a female

voice near him; and as he turned to look, he saw a figure snatch one from a villager, and hand it to him: as she did so, her veil dropped —it was Ameena!

"Come on, ye base-born!" cried the Khan, who was pointing the remaining jinjall at the group, which, staggered by their loss, had halted for a moment. "Come on, ye sons of dogs,—come on ye kafirs and idol-worshipers,—come and taste of death from the hands of true believers! Ha! do ye hesitate? then ye shall have it again, by Alla!" and he fired. "Look you, Meer Sahib," he cried in exultation; "two are down—another! by the Prophet, well shot!"

"Here is another gun, Meer Sahib," said the same sweet voice; and the lady handed him one.

"What thou here, my pearl! Shabash! thou shouldst have shot too if thou couldst hit. So, thou wouldst not remain below; no wonder, with those screaming women: and thou art welcome here too, if thou darest to look on, and see those murdering villains go down like sparrows.—Another, by Alla! See, the dog fairly

rolls over and over! Why do ye not come, O valiant eaters of dirt? by your souls, come on, —we have more for ye!"

"They have had enough I think, Khan," said Kasim; "they are drawing off."

And they were indeed. The plundering band, unprovided with matchlocks, could make little impression on a village so well defended, and hastily turned about their horses; those who had remained below were informed of this by the Patél, who had descended; and, led by him, quickly advanced to the edge of the village, from whence they could fire without exposing themselves.

"Who will strike a blow with Kasim Patél?" cried the youth, who was not now to be controlled. "Come, who will?—there are the horses saddled below."

In vain was it that the Khan held him for an instant, and he heard the voice of gentle entreaty from the lady: he hurried down the steps, followed by several of the Khan's men, and throwing themselves on their horses they dashed after the fugitives.

They soon cleared the village, and what fol-

lowed was intensely watched by the Khan and Ameena.

"Holy Alla, protect the youth!" ejaculated the lady.

"Ameen!" cried the Khan; "look! he i upon them now, and Dilawur-Ali, Moedeen, and Fazel after him. See—one goes down beneath that cut!" for they saw the sword of Kasim flash in the light. "He is by another; the fellow cuts at him. Well parried, by the Prophet! now give it him! A curse on the darkness," he continued after a pause, as, shading his eyes with his hand, he endeavoured to pierce the thick gloom. "Canst thou see, Ameena?"

"No, my lord. I lost him as you did,—Alla be his shield!"

"To be sure he is;—what could those cowards do against such an arm and such a heart? I tell thee, girl, we had eaten dirt but for him."

Ameena sighed; she remembered the excited cries of the young man and his flashing eyes, as she handed him the gun. "He is a brave youth," she said.

A few scattered shots here and there, which

were further and further removed every moment, showed that the marauders were retreating, and soon the men began to return one by one; in a few minutes they saw Kasim Ali and his companions approaching quietly, which assured them there was no more danger, and that the party had retired beyond the limits of safe pursuit.

"Come down and meet them, fairest," said the Khan; "they who have fought so well for us deserve a warm welcome."

As Kasim and his companions rode up, they were greeted with hearty congratulations on their success, and all crowded round him so thickly, that he had much ado to force his way to where the Khan stood. But he reached him after some little elbowing and good-humoured remonstrance; and just at that moment, a torch which had been lighted was raised above the heads of the crowd; it disclosed his figure, apparently covered with blood.

"Holy Alla, he is wounded!" exclaimed the lady; "he will bleed to death!" and she moved as though she would have advanced.

"Tut, tut, foolish one!" cried the Khan,

holding her back; "it ought to be gladness to thee to see the blood of thine enemies and mine;—thou art not hurt, Kasim?"

"A trifle, I believe, Khan,—a slight wound on my chest from one of the rascals, which hath bled somewhat and stained my clothes; but he paid dearly for the blood he drew."

"I'll warrant he did; and as for thy wound we must see to it. I have some skill in such matters, and perhaps the Khanum will be able to find an old sheet or something to tie it up. So sit down here; and do thou, Ameena, search for some rags. Well, so thou canst give an account of some of them, Kasim?"

"Of two, Khan Sahib; one fellow I cut down as we started,—he is living I think,—the other fought better."

"And is dead for his pains; well, I do not begrudge thee this cut, it will do thee no harm. See, here is the Khanum with the rags,—never mind her, this is no time for ceremony with such as thou. Ho! Daood, Zoolficar, some water here! and do you, Kasim, take off that vest, we shall soon see what has happened.

A trifle, a trifle, after all. Alla be praised!" he continued, when the garment was removed, and the broad and muscular chest of the young man exposed to view; "a few days will heal it up."

But Ameena thought otherwise; she had heard of wounds, but this was the first she had seen; and a gash which, though not deep, extended half across the chest of the young man, was in her eyes a more serious matter than her lord appeared to think. She felt very faint and sick as she looked upon it, but rallied on perceiving that Kasim considered it a trifle, as indeed it was, and readily assisted to bind it up.

She was very near him, and it was exquisite pleasure to feel her gentle touch upon his shoulder, as she assisted to hold the bandages which the Khan passed round his chest; he fancied too that once her glance had met his, and he could not help trying to catch it again: he succeeded at last, through the veil. Her lustrous dark eyes flashed very brightly; he could not see their expression, but it was

certain to him that they had sought his own and met them.

"We want still another handkerchief, or something, to tie over all," said the Khan when he had finished; "hast thou one, Ameena?"

"I have—here it is," she replied; ungirding one from around her waist. "The Meer Sahib is welcome to it."

"I owe a thousand obligations," returned Kasim; "if I were your brother you could not have done more for me: how unworthy am I to receive such attention,—I who am but your servant!"

"Do not say so," cried both at once; "thou art far more than this to us."

"Ah!" thought Kasim, "I am but a moth playing around a lamp, tempted by bright and dazzling light, and hardly as yet warned. I am a fool to think on her; but can I ever forget her face as she stood yonder and cheered me by her presence?—the second time I have seen it, but perhaps not the last." The Khan roused him from his reverie.

"Lie down," he said; "there will be the less flow of blood."

Kasim obeyed readily; for the same fair hands that had helped to bind his wound had also spread a soft mattress for him, and placed a pillow for his head. Perhaps the loss of blood had affected him a little, for in a few moments he felt drowsy and gradually fell asleep; and Ameena sate watching him at a little distance, for the Khan had gone to see what had been done with the bodies of those who had fallen.

But, as is often the case after violent excitement, his sleep, though at first heavy and profound, did not long continue thus. Perhaps too the wound pained him, for he was restless and moved impatiently from side to side.

The Khan was long absent, and Ameena still kept her watch; she might have withdrawn, yet there was something so exciting and novel to her in her position—it was a source of such quiet delight to her to watch the features of him who had saved her life, and now had been wounded in her defence,—and she was so thickly veiled that he could not see her even were he awake—that she remained.

Rapidly her mind brought before her the

events of the last few days. Her own young life in the world had hardly begun, and yet more dangers had been present to her than she had ever pictured to herself, rife as her imagination had been upon the subject when she left her home. She had been already rescued from death, now perhaps from violence; and he who had been the sole instrument of her protection in the one case, and who had fought under her own eyes in the second, lay before her. She had hardly heard him speak, yet she thought she could remember every word he had spoken; and then came vividly to her remembrance the glance, the earnest hurried glance, which told her would have dwelt longer had it dared. And as she remembered this, her heart fluttered under sensations very new and almost painful to her; she could not define them, — but involuntarily she drew nearer to the sleeping youth and watched the more.

She saw his brow contracted as if with pain; and, as he every now and then stirred and the light fell on his features, she could observe his lips move as though he spoke, but she could

not catch a word. For a few minutes it was thus, but at last he spoke interruptedly; it was of war, of the fight he had lately been engaged in; and she could distinguish a few words, defiance to the marauders, encouragement to the men around. Then there was another pause, and he slept peacefully, even as a child. "May he rest safely, O Alla!" she said.

But again he dreamed; sounds escaped him,—low mutterings which were undistinguishable; she bent her ear even closer;—she could not hear aught for awhile that she understood, but at length there was one word which made her very soul bound within her, and caused in the moment a feeling of choking and oppression in her throat almost unbearable,—"Ameena!" it was repeated twice distinctly, yet very softly.

"Holy Alla! he knows my name!" she said mentally; "he thinks of me,—I am present to his sleeping fancies amidst war and turmoil which still pursue him. How could he have heard my name?"

But the voice of the Khan was heard at

some little distance, and interrupted her chain of questions. "He must not find me here," she thought, rising hastily, and gently stealing from the spot into the place which had been screened off for her occupation. Indeed for the last few moments hidden thoughts had suddenly sprung forth, and she could hardly unconcernedly, beside the sleeping youth, him who now sought her.

The Khan passed Kasim. "He sleeps well," he said to Daood, who was with him; "hath any one watched by him?"

"No one, Khodawund: the men were all with my lord."

"That was ill; one of ye should have remained; where is that idle cook? he hath no need of rest; let him sit up here, if he can keep his eyes open; and do ye all take what sleep ye can, for we shall start, Inshalla! ere noon tomorrow."

"You are to remain with Kasim Sahib," said Daood to the cook, rousing him, "and not to stir till morning breaks, or he awakes,—dost thou hear?"

"I do, good Daood; but methinks thou

mightest sit with me too, seeing that it is near morning. By thy beard, I like not being alone."

"O coward! thou art not alone; see, thou hast the hero of the night lying beside thee,—one who has slain some men since he last ate; whereas thou hast not even slain a fowl. I tell thee there is no danger: yonder is my bedding,—I shall not be far off if thou wantest me."

Soon all was silent around, even the village dogs had ceased to bark; the clamour of women and of crying frightened children had subsided; and, except the watchfires in several parts, which threw up their strong red glare against the sky, around which most of the villagers were assembled in groups, nothing indicated that any conflict or alarm had taken place. Scattered about, the Khan's attendants and servants lay wrapped in their sheets in deep sleep. The horses even, apparently secure of rest, had lain down, and all was still, except one of the horses which had been captured, which every now and then sent up a shrill neigh that sounded far and near in the stillness of the night. But above, on the tower,

the Patél and several of his best men still kept watch.

Kasim slept still restlessly, and often sighed and muttered in his sleep. "His thoughts are with the battle," thought Zoolficar; "they say it was a brave sight to see the Mahrattas go down one by one before his aim; he shot them as he would deer in the jungle,—may their mothers be polluted! Alla! Alla! guide us safely now; this is the third alarm we have had in this accursed country;—but hark! What was that he said?—Ameena! again Ameena!—the Khanum,—why should he dream of her? Poor youth, he would have been a fitter mate for her than that man of camps and battles. But it may not be of her he dreams,—perhaps he has some one he loves of the same name. Ay, it is very likely; so dream on, Meer Sahib, may thy slumbers be lighter!"

But they were not; after little more than an hour's restless slumber, he awoke, and found the worthy functionary by his side.

"How! thou here, Zoolfoo! art thou not sleepy?"

"It was my lord's order that I should watch

you, noble sir, and I only obey it. Methinks you have rested but indifferently, for your sleep has been disturbed, and you have been speaking."

"Ah well, I have but few secrets," he said gaily, "so I fear not for the words; and in truth this cut is rather painful, and too tightly bandaged. See if thou canst find a barber, Zoolfoo; I will have these straps undone."

"If my lord will trust me," replied Zoolfoo, "I will ease his pain. Ere I was a cook I was a barber; and Hyderabad is not an indifferent place to learn how to dress wounds. Mashalla! our young men are rare hands at street brawls."

"Well, do thy best,—at this hour it will be hard to find any one."

Zoolfoo was as good as his word. In a short time the bandages were arranged more easily, as the bleeding had stopped in a great measure, and Kasim found himself refreshed by the change. A hooka too was not to be despised, and this Zoolfoo soon brought from among his stores.

Gradually Kasim led him to talk of his city,

of his home, of his family; he earnestly wished to know more particulars of the Khanum, of her early life, and her ill-assorted marriage. Zoolfoo mentioned his sister.

"Ay, her who thou saidst was servant in the Khanum's family."

"The same: she was the Khanum's nurse for awhile, and she is very fond of her."

"Why did she not bring her then?"

"She wished to come, but the Khan said she would be a trouble on the road, and he left her behind; but—"

"Perhaps the Khanum did not wish it?"

"Not wish it? Sir, she was grieved to part with her, for she had tended her from her birth, and loved her as her own daughter."

"Then you have often heard of her?"

"I have, a thousand times. My sister was her own attendant, and never quitted her till the hour of her departure."

"Know you then how she came to marry the Khan? you said once before that he was of no family."

"I will tell you," said the cook. "Her father is a Munsubdar*, of Nizam Ali's court

* A nobleman who holds an office in a native court.

nominally he has good pay, and one or two villages to support his rank; but he was expensive in his youth, for he was a gay man, and perhaps not over scrupulous. Gradually the difficulties of the Government caused a the salaries of the officers to fall into arrears. Then came with that a train of distresses; the elephant was sold, some jewels pledged,—then some horses went, and their servants were discharged. There were heavy mortgages made upon the villages, and other difficulties occurred; the interest accumulated, and the creditors grew very clamorous; some more jewels were sold, and they were quieted for awhile; but lately they were in distress, I heard,—indeed my sister told me her pay and that of other servants had been reduced, and that the family denied themselves many luxuries to which they had been accustomed. This daughter, Ameena, was marriageable, and her great beauty was known; they had many offers for her, but they looked high; they thought the Huzoor* himself might ask for her, and that the fortunes of the house might rise; and while this was going on, the Khan

* Prince.

Sahib, who had his emissaries abroad to look out for a beautiful wife, heard of her. He offered himself immediately; his low birth was not thought of, for he had great wealth and bestowed it liberally, and finally the marriage took place with much pomp. The poor child was dazzled; and you see her here, Meer Sahib, exposed to all the vicissitudes of travelling in unsettled times,—one day drowned,—another, attacked by those villainous Mahrattas,—whom your worship has freed us of,—when, rose as she is, she never ought to have left the zenankhana of a youthful and valiant lord."

Kasim sighed involuntarily. "It was a base thing," he said, "to sell one so fair and young."

"It was, Meer Sahib,—you have rightly called it a sale; for the Khan had to pay off a heavy mortgage upon two of the villages, which has restored the family to affluence: however the thing is done now, and there is no helping it. I pity the poor Khanum however, for she has to face two old wives, who will not thank the Khan for bringing one so young and beautiful to his house."

"You should keep a watch over her yourself, Zoolfoo."

"I will, so may Alla give me power!" he said earnestly; "she does not know me as yet, but I will soon contrive to let her know, and thus I may be able to serve her at a pinch."

"And remember, I am ever ready to aid you," said the young man; "I have saved her life once, and, by the blessing of Alla, no harm shall come to so fair a creature while I have power to help her."

Just then the morning, which had been long in breaking, showed pretty plainly; and Kasim arose, and performing his ablutions, cried with a loud voice the Azan, or call to prayers. This too roused the Khan, and, joined by several others, they repeated, as indeed was their wont, their prayers together.

"I am as stout as ever, Khan Sahib, I thank you," answered Kasim in reply to the many inquiries of the former; "the wound pained me a trifle, and your good Zoolficar, who is very expert, loosened the bandages for me; since then it has been quite easy. But how say you—march or halt, which shall it be?"

"Let us take counsel of the Patél, he seems a decent fellow," returned the Khan, "and abide by his advice,—he knows the country."

He was summoned, and the result of the consultation was advice to them to depart immediately. "I am disinterested, noble sirs," he said; "for if otherwise, my own fears would prompt me to make you stay by me; but after your conduct last night, I put myself and my village out of consideration."

"And the men, Meer Sahib?"

"I had half engaged them yesterday, when the alarm was given; how say you, Patél, can we have them?"

"Surely, surely! half of those I have shall accompany you; for I fear no further molestation."

They were summoned, and at once expressed their readiness to go; after this, the preparations were soon completed, a hasty meal of kicheree* was cooked and eaten, and, girding up their loins carefully—seeing that their arms were properly loaded—making every preparation for defence, if necessary,—the party assembled to start.

* Rice and pulse boiled together.

Nine of the Mahrattas had fallen in the attack; of these, two lived, desperately wounded; five horses had been secured, two had been killed, and the remainder had been carried off by the horsemen.

These horses the Khan appropriated to his own use, and generously gave what plunder was found upon them and on the bodies to be divided among the sufferers of the village they had seen burned, directing the Patél to account for the sum. He had in vain attempted to press it upon Kasim.

Now, therefore, our travellers are once more upon the wide plains, moving warily and close together: altogether they are twelve good horsemen, and, with the six or seven villagers, armed with long matchlocks, and the grooms mounted on the ponies which the servants had ridden, present a very formidable appearance; while the dry gravelly road allows them to push forward at a good pace without interruption.

The road from Bellary to the Mysore country appears flat, but in reality is not so; the land rises in long and gentle undulations some thousand feet in the course of about one hundred miles,—that is, from the town of Bellary to where

it enters a rugged pass between some mountains, one side of which is formed by the rough and stony back of the fort of Pencondah. As the traveller advances from Bellary, he sees these undulations, each of many miles perhaps in length; and when arrived at the top of one, expecting to descend, he finds another spread out before him, perhaps of equal length, the summit of which he must reach in like manner. The difference this causes in the climate is most remarkable; a few days' travel produces an entire revolution; and from the steaming heat of the Carnatic, at Bellary and above it, the traveller as he proceeds southwards breathes a purer, cooler, and more genial atmosphere.

The heat which had existed where we began our narrative, and which rendered travelling irksome, had now given place to coolness, which even at near midday made them glad to wrap shawls or other warm garments around them; and thus, while it invigorated man and beast, enabled them to push on rapidly without fatigue.

They had travelled for two days without alarm, and were within an easy distance of the entrance of the pass, when, on arriving at the

top of one of the summits we have mentioned, they saw with some alarm a body of horse before them, scattered, and apparently on the same track as themselves.

"It is the Mahrattas!" cried the Khan.

"True," said Kasim; "but I fear them not now—we are too strong; see, the rogues turn!"

"They do," said the Khan; "but never fear, let us spread out a little on each side; they think us some small party, whom they can plunder with impunity." The little manœuvre was done, and had an instant effect. The Mahratta horsemen, who were coming down about a mile distant at a gallop, suddenly halted, held a hurried consultation for awhile, and then struck off to the right, down a road which led to the westward, and, having gone a good distance, quite out of shot, again halted.

"They are wary fellows," said Kasim, "and have profited by our former lesson; but as we pass them we will fire a shot or two: that will teach them their distance, or I am mistaken."

It was done, and had the desired effect; the horsemen moved further away, though they

travelled in a parallel line. Shots were, however, discharged from time to time; and the whole party, including the lady, were amused at theirconsternation, as they scattered at every discharge.

Gradually, as they neared the pass, the Mahrattas dropped behind; and after they had entered the rocky valley, the first turn shut them from their view altogether.

"Now we are properly on our own ground," said the Khan, "and soon we shall see one of the frontier posts; there we shall be secure from all alarms, and from thence to the city there is no fear."

As he said, after a short travel further, they approached a strong village, well garrisoned; and here, after their many perils and escapes, they rested safely for three days ere they pursued their journey; indeed Kasim's wound needed rest.

The information the Khan gave was acted upon, and a party of horse scoured the country in every direction, but without success; the marauders had made their escape, and were no more seen.

CHAPTER VIII.

Leaving for the present the Khan and his companions to pursue their way to Seringapatam, we claim the usual privilege of writers to transport our readers where, and as suddenly, as we please, and

"To take up our wings and be off to the west."

To the perfect understanding of the events connected with this veritable history, therefore, we feel ourselves obliged to retrogade a few years, and to leave the glowing climate of the East for awhile, to breathe in idea the colder, yet more congenial air of England.

It was on the evening then of a wet and sleety day of December, 1785, that a large

and merry family group sat around a cheerful fire in the comfortable drawing-room of the rectory of Alston, in ——shire. It consisted of the rector, his lady, and two sons, one of whom, Edward, had returned from college for the vacation, and who was a youth of perhaps eighteen years of age; his brother Charles was somewhat younger, of that awkward period of life, between school and college, which is not often productive of much gratification to the possessor, and which all desire to see changed,—fond mothers, perhaps, again to childhood,—fathers, to manhood,—and sisters, to anything more agreeable and ornamental than the awkwardness and *mauvaise honte* peculiarly attendant upon that epoch in life.

There were three girls, one between Edward and Charles, and another some years younger; a third, as yet a child. Anywhere, any individual of the family would have been very remarkable for good looks; but here, when all were assembled together, they were a sight round that cheerful blazing fire which caused the eye of the mother to glisten with something like a tear of pleasure as she looked

around the circle, and the heart of the father to swell with proud satisfaction.

Mr. Compton, the rector, the second son of a baronet of the county, had early been destined to the church. In addition to a very handsome private fortune bequeathed to him by his father, the rich living of Alston had been secured to him while he was at college, and he had succeeded to it as soon as he was of age to be ordained. He had married early in life the sister of an old friend and college chum, also a baronet of a neighbouring county, and the union had proved one of continued happiness. With an ample fortune, gentle and refined tastes and pursuits,—an excellent musician, a tolerable painter, a good classic, and with literary abilities above an ordinary standard,—Mr. Compton had resources within himself which ensured him a placid and equable enjoyment of life. A sincere and pious man, his ministry was a blessing to his numerous parishioners; and his society, where so much intelligence and accomplishment prevailed, was eagerly sought for by all the families of the county neighbourhood.

With no remarkable strength of character, Mrs. Compton was yet an admirable woman; she was possessed of but few accomplishments, but then those were not the days when youth was crammed with knowledge; she had however a fair share for a lady of that period. Perhaps her talent for music had partly attracted the notice, and helped, with her amiable disposition and great personal charms, to win the admiration, and eventually to secure the affections of her husband. In her career as a mother, she had been kind and loving, even beyond a mother's usual fondness; and if at times her excess of affection had overpowered the sense of her duty in checking the foibles of her children, yet she had so gentle and admirable a monitor at her side, one whose advice and example she esteemed the most precious blessings vouchsafed to her, that she had been enabled not only to bring up her children in perfect obedience to her, and in strict moral and religious principles, but in that complete harmony of intercourse among themselves, the result of judicious training and pure example.

In truth so completely united a family, though perhaps not of rare occurrence, is not so often to be seen as might be desirable to society; and the young Comptons were noted through the neighbourhood for their extreme good-breeding, and for the devoted affection they bore one another.

Happy indeed as we know the family to have been,—as it must needs have been from its constitution,—it had suffered already one stroke of sorrow, which, mingling as it ever will in all the affairs of life, and with those who apparently are farthest removed from its influence, had come in a shape and at a time but little expected by any.

Their eldest son, Herbert, was a high-spirited yet fine-tempered youth. He was destined by his father for the church, in the offices of which he himself felt such satisfaction, that no employment or pursuit in life, he thought, could equal the gratification afforded by them. Herbert, however, had from the first shown an unconquerable repugnance to the sacred calling. It had been proposed to him on his leaving school, preparatory to his entering on his col-

lege course; and though he had gone through one or two terms at Oxford with credit, yet he continued to implore his father so strongly not to persist in destining him to this profession, that at last Mr. Compton yielded, and the plan was abandoned.

Nor was Mrs. Compton surprised to hear a declaration made with much fear and hesitation, that a military life of all others was that in which he felt assured he should succeed best, as it was most consonant to his high spirit and daring character.

Much entreaty was used—kind, gentle, loving entreaty—by both his parents, especially his mother, to whom it was an agonizing thought that her first-born, her boy of whom she was so proud, should embrace a profession which would expose him to other than the ordinary dangers of life. All was however of no avail; and at the age of eighteen, or thereabouts, his father, whose family influence was great, was enabled to purchase for him a commission in a regiment of the line.

There was at that time no immediate cause to suppose that the regiment would be called

out on active service; and as that to which he had been appointed was after a short time quartered in their own neighbourhood, they had the gratification of seeing Herbert happy, fond of his corps and his duties, beloved by his brother officers, and studying all the details of science connected with his new profession; and indeed his noble appearance in his uniform, and his now gay cheerful disposition—so different from what his deportment had been while in uncertainty about himself and his future career, —in a great degree reconciled his parents to the change in their plans for his life.

Promotion, if the means were at hand, was no difficult matter to obtain in those days; and Mr. Compton, by the advice of a relative, a general officer who had assisted him in obtaining the commission in the first instance, had purchased Herbert on as far as a company, and was waiting for a favourable opportunity for exchanging him into a cavalry regiment. But while the negotiations for purchase were proceeding, sudden orders arrived for the regiment to proceed on foreign service,—to India in fact, where the increased possessions of the East

India Company required additional protection.

This news was a thunderbolt to the family, coming as it did so unexpectedly. It might have been foreseen and thought of; but it had not, for Herbert was with them, and that was enough; and any idea of his leaving them, if distantly contemplated, had never been allowed to dwell in their hearts. It was in vain that Mrs. Compton besought Herbert, in the agony of her maternal affection, to resign, to exchange, to ask for leave of absence, to carry into effect the negotiations which had been pending.

The young man loved his mother with an intensity of affection, but he saw also that to yield to its dictates in this instance would be to forfeit his honour and the obligations of his duty. Mr. Compton forbore to urge him at all; his fine feelings at once told him that the young man was right; and though it was a sore trial to part with one so dear, to relinquish him to the chances of hard service in so distant and then unknown a land, yet he did not murmur; and in many a secret prayer in his

closet, and daily in his family worship, commended him, as a father's affection only can prompt prayer for a child, to the protection of that merciful Providence which had as yet bestowed on him and his unnumbered blessings.

But there was yet another on whom this unlooked-for blow fell even more heavily than on those we have mentioned. Amy Hayward, the only daughter of a gentleman of fortune, whose estate joined the fields and extensive lawns and grounds which formed the glebe of the rectory, had from the earliest times she could remember been the companion and playmate of all the Comptons. Her two brothers had shared the intimacy with her, and whenever the boys were all at their respective homes, there was a daily intercourse kept up between them,—daily meetings, rambles in Beechwood Park, fishing in the brawling trout-stream which ran through it, nutting in its noble woods, and a thousand other joyous amusements peculiar to a happy country childhood.

We say country childhood, for we feel that there is the widest difference between that and a childhood spent in a town. With the former

there is a store of remembrances of gentle pleasures, of those natural delights which are so inseparable to boyhood or girlhood,—when the first gushes of the deep-seated springs of feeling are expanded among the beauties of natural scenes, in themselves peaceful, and speaking quiet to the heart, ever too prone to excitement when full vent is given to joyous spirits;—where every occupation is fraught with delights, which, if the faintest remembrance remains in after life, are treasured up as the purest perhaps of all the pleasurable impressions the heart has ever known.

How different is the town boy! he is a man before his time; and in that one word how much meaning is there! How much less innocence—how many cares! his amusements lack the ease of hilarity and freedom; he sees the dull monotonous streets teeming with spectacles of vice or misery,—the endless form of busy man ever before him, instead of bright skies, the green recesses of the woods, the fresh balmy air, the thousand exquisite creations of nature, ever appealing to his best sympathies. A city can teach him little that can remain to benefit his

understanding, or invigorate its keenest and most delicious enjoyment, a complete appreciation of nature in all her forms; but, on the contrary, it may induce a callousness, which too often grows upon him in after life, and causes those simple pleasures to be despised or unnoticed, in which after all, perhaps, are contained the germs of the purest enjoyment.

Amy was a few years younger than Herbert; beautiful as a child, that beauty had grown up with her, and appeared to increase. But her features were not regular, nor could she properly be called handsome; and yet if large, lustrous, loving eyes, a fair and bright complexion, and long and light brown curling hair, with a small figure, in which roundness, activity, and extreme grace were combined, can be called beauty, she possessed it eminently. Her face too, which was ever varying in expression and lighted up with intelligence, was a fair index to her mind,—full of affection and keen perception of beauty. If Herbert had not the latter quality so enthusiastically as she had, he at least had sufficient with cultivation to make him a tolerable draughtsman; and Beechwood

Park contained so many natural charms, that, as they grew up, there was scarcely a point of blue and distant landscape, rocky brawling stream, or quiet glade, which they had not sketched in company.

We have said they had been inseparable from childhood—ay, from the earliest times; though the young Comptons and Haywards joined in all their pastimes, yet Herbert had ever a quiet stroll with Amy. Her garden, her greenhouse, her rabbits, her fowls, her gold and silver fish,—all were of as much interest to him for her sake as to herself. And so it had continued: childish cares and pastimes had given place to more matured amusements and pursuits, and the intercourse of the elders of the families continued to be so harmonious, that no interruption had ever occurred to their constant society.

If Herbert or Amy had been questioned upon the subject, they could hardly have said that as yet they loved; but it would be unnatural to suppose that, knowing and appreciating each other as they did, they should not have loved, and that ardently. The fire had

been kindled long ago, and slumbered only for a passing breath of excitement to fan it into a bright and enduring flame.

It was, then, on the day which followed a night of intense anguish to all—that on which no longer any opposition had been made to Herbert's departure, and they were beginning to bear to talk of it with some calmness—that Mr. Compton said to his lady, as they sat after breakfast, "You had better write this sad news to the Haywards, my love; they have always felt such an interest in Herbert's welfare, that they ought to hear this from ourselves, before it is carried there by the servants, and perhaps broken abruptly to them."

"I will be the bearer of the news myself," said Herbert, starting up; "no one ought to tell it but me; and it would distress you, dear mother, to write of it; besides, I promised to go over to Amy, either yesterday or today, to sketch with her, as she wants to see the new style I have learned."

"Thank you, my kind darling," she replied; "you have indeed saved me the necessity of inflicting a pang on them, and one on myself too.

And you must screw up your courage to the sticking-place when you mention it to Amy," she added almost gaily, with some emphasis on the name: "poor child, she will grieve to hear it indeed!"

"Yes, she will be sorry, very sorry, I know," said Herbert; "but it can't be helped now, and I must put as good a face as I can upon the matter to them all. I will be as gay as I can," he said, taking up his hat and opening the door, "and will not be long away."

Poor fellow! the last words were tremulous enough for a gay captain to utter, and his mother and father thought so too.

"It will be very unexpected to them," he said after a painful pause.

"Very indeed, dearest," was the only reply she could make, for her tears were flowing silently and fast.

CHAPTER IX.

For the convenience of the families, a gravel walk had been made through the rectory fields to the little river which divided them from the park. Across this, Mr. Hayward had thrown a very elegant rustic bridge, the joint design of Amy and Herbert, to replace a rude yet picturesque one formed of planks with side-rails, which had existed previously.

Over this, Herbert rapidly passed onwards into the park; and avoiding the walk, which had been carried by a considerable detour through some beautiful glades, struck at once across the sward, in a direct line for the house.

At any other time, the extreme beauty of the day, and of the park under its influence, would not have failed to attract the attention of the young man, and to have caused him to stop

more than once, to admire for the hundredth time some noble avenues of beech and oak—some picturesquely-grouped herd of deer or flock of sheep—or some exquisite effect of light and shade as the soft floating clouds transiently caused it. He would perhaps have sauntered gently; but now he hurried on, wrapt in his own reflections, and they were not of the most agreeable or intelligible kind. The flocks of sheep as he passed, fled startled at his quick approach, while the deer raised themselves from their recumbent postures and gazed wonderingly at him, whom they almost knew.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, as he reached the hall-door and rang for admittance, "I hardly know what I am come about, or what to say. But it must be done,—so I will let things take their chance. I can invent no plan of proceeding which will spare them pain or myself either. No,—better leave it to the force of circumstances."

"Is any one at home, Edward?" he said to the footman who answered the bell.

"Yes, sir, Master and Miss Amy are in the study."

"Thank you;" and he passed on with a beating heart.

"Well, noble captain, what news?" "Ah, I am so glad you are come, Herbert, I want you *so* much," were the greetings of the father and daughter, in their hearty, unformal, and affectionate manner. "Mamma tried to persuade me to go out with her to pay a visit to the Somervilles," continued Amy, "but I would not, for I felt somehow or other that you would come, and, as I said, I want you. You have been such a truant of late, that I was really beginning to be half angry with you. So ponder well on the escape you have made of my wrath by this opportune appearance."

Herbert said something about his duties, only half intelligible to himself.

"Yes," continued the light-hearted girl, "those duties are horrid things; ever since you have been a soldier, we have seen nothing of you at all, and I am very much disposed to be very angry with your colonel and all your regiment for not giving you perpetual leave of absence. I declare I have no companion now, for you know the boys are both at college. He

is very naughty not to come oftener,—is he not, Papa?"

"Perhaps Herbert is right, my love, in not humouring so giddy a girl as yourself. But here he is now, so make the most of him, for there may be another week or fortnight of duty which he has come to tell you of."

How near he had guessed the truth,—unconsciously—only so far short of its sad reality!

Herbert winced. "I am sure if I had but known that I was wanted, I would have come," he said hesitatingly; "but the truth is, I have been occupied both at home and at the barracks for the last few days by some business which I could not leave."

"Well, your being here proves that to be all over, and so you are not to think of going away today," said Amy. "I want you to help me with a drawing I am doing for Lady Somerville; and as she is a great connoisseur, it must be as good as our united heads and fingers can make it; and before we sit down to that, I wish you to run down to the river with me, and sketch a group of rocks, hazel-bushes, and reeds, which I want for the foreground of my picture. Now, no excuses, Herbert, though

you look as if you were going to begin some,—I will not hear them. Wait here with papa, till I put on my bonnet and get my sketch-book.

"Now, don't let him go, I pray you, papa," she continued, looking back from the door she had just opened, "for I shall not be five minutes away."

"You hear your doom, Herbert," said Mr. Hayward gaily; "so come, sit down; tell me all about your regiment, and how this exchange of yours prospers. A dashing young fellow like you ought to be in the cavalry, and I hope to hear of your soon exchanging the scarlet for the blue."

"That is all off, I am sorry to say, sir," replied Herbert.

"Off! what do you mean? Surely your father told me that he had lodged the money for the exchange, and that the matter had only to pass through the forms of the War Office."

"So he had; but an event has happened which has put an end to all our hopes upon the subject."

"What, is the man dead?"

"No, sir, he is well enough, but—" and Herbert hesitated.

"But what, Herbert? If there is anything that I can do,—you know there can be no ceremony between us."

"No, no, sir, I well know that; and—"

"Why what is the matter with the boy?" cried Mr. Hayward, observing that Herbert seemed to be struggling with some strong emotion; "has anything happened?"

"You may as well know it at once," replied Herbert, mastering his feelings. "I am come on purpose to tell it to you, lest you should hear it in some out of the way manner. My regiment is ordered abroad, and I am to go of course."

"Well, I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Hayward; "you will have a pleasant continental frolic, and see something of the world;—and sorry too, since we shall lose you for a time."

"But our destination is not the continent, but India," said Herbert sadly.

"Good God! you don't mean that," exclaimed Mr. Hayward, rising. "Pardon me, my dear boy, that I should have spoken lightly on a subject which is so distressing. India! that indeed is a sad word: can nothing be done to prevent this? cannot you exchange? cannot—"

"I would not if I were able, dear sir," said Herbert. "I feel this to be my duty,—I could not in any honour leave the regiment at such a time, without a suspicion of the basest motives being attached to my character."

"Tut, tut, Herbert! the thing is done every day, so let not that distress or prevent you."

Herbert shook his head.

"I say it is, I could tell you a dozen instances."

"Perhaps you might, where the only enemy was the climate; but our possessions in the East are menaced, and the service will be active. I learned this when the news came to the regiment; and as none of the officers have attempted an exchange, except one or two whose characters are not high, I feel that I cannot."

"And you are right, Herbert," said Mr. Hayward, after a pause, "you are right. God help your parents! your poor mother—this will be a sad blow to her!" and he paused, as a tear glistened in his eyes.

"It was at first, certainly, sir; but they are already more composed, and are beginning to bear to talk of it."

"And how soon are you to go? The Go-

vernment will give you some time, surely, for preparation."

"Very little, I am sorry to say. We march for Dover on Monday, and sail, we hear, in ten days or a fortnight."

"Monday! Bless me, and today is Thursday; this is the worst news of all. Poor Amy, what will she say?"

"Yes, sir," said Herbert, "I want your advice, whether to mention it to her myself or not. I cannot refuse to accompany her now,—indeed, you saw she would take no denial. I will do exactly as you please."

"Why, it is an unpleasant matter to any of us to think or speak of, and I really do not know what to say. But as you are the person concerned, and can give her every information yourself," continued Mr. Hayward, after a pause, "perhaps you had better talk it over with her. Break it as gently as you can, however, for it would be useless to deny to you that she will be very sorry to hear it."

"Come, Herbert!" cried Amy, opening the door; "I have been longer away than I thought. Come, here are books and paper, and my stool for you to carry, so make haste."

"You will be discreet with her, Herbert," said Mr. Hayward gently, giving his hand.

Herbert could only press it in acknowledgement. In a moment afterwards they were gone.

Mr. Hayward turned to the window involuntarily, to watch them as they descended the gentle slope of the lawn. There was a vague thought in his mind that they had better not have gone; but as he could find no reason for the idea, he dismissed it. He was a benevolent, simple-hearted man; he had had neither the necessity nor the inclination to study character, and could not at once estimate the effect such a communication as his daughter was about to receive would have upon her; nor did it at once strike him that the long and intimate association she had held with Herbert could have produced any tenderer feeling than she had ever expressed or appeared to entertain. Her mother, had she been there, might have judged differently; but, as Mr. Hayward soliloquized, as their retreating figures were lost to his view behind a low shrubbery, "Matters must take their own course now; it is too late to recall them."

Onwards they went; leaving the broad walk

which led by the side of the lawn and shrubberies, they at once struck across the park, down one of the noble glades of beech-trees from whence the place took its name. The day was bright and warm,—one of those blessed days of June, when all nature seems to put forward her choicest productions for the gratification and admiration of man,—when cowslip and daisy, buttercup and wild anemone, with a thousand other flowers of lowly pretensions yet of exquisite beauty, have opened their bright blossoms to the sunlight, and are wooing it in silent thankfulness.

The verdant carpet beneath them was full of these, glowing in their freshest bloom; the sheep and lambs, dotted here and there upon every slope, lazily cropped the short, soft herbage; and the tinkling of their bells and the faint bleating of the lambs, now distant, now near, mingled with the hum of the many bees which busily drew their loads of sweets, roaming from flower to flower. Butterflies of many hues, their gorgeous wings glaring in the bright light, fluttered swiftly along, coquetting as it were with the flowers, and enjoying in their full vigour the sunny brightness of their short lives.

There was no wind, and yet a freshness in the air which tempered the heat of the sun; the beech-trees, with their shining leaves, appeared sleeping in the sunlight, and as if resting, during the short period there might be allowed them, from their almost ceaseless waving. Far around them the park stretched away into broad glades, some ended by woods, others presenting peeps of blue and dim distance; while through all there was a vapour floating, sufficient only to take off the harshness from every outline, whether of tree or distance, and to blend the whole harmoniously into that soft dreamy appearance, so exquisite and so soothing to behold.

"How lovely the park is today, Herbert!" said Amy, "is it not? Methinks every step we take presents a new picture which ought to be drawn. Look now at that group of sheep and deer almost intermixed; the deer have chosen the fern which is partly under that magnificent beech, the sheep are all among them, and their young lambs enjoying their merry gambols; the light is falling in that beautiful chequered manner which I strive in vain to represent; and yet how great are the

masses, how perfect the unstudied composition, how exquisite the colour! The brightest and warmest green, spangled with flowers, is before us; this is broken by the shadows: beyond the tree there is a delicious grey, melting imperceptibly into the most tender blue. Is it not a picture now, Herbert?"

"A lovely one indeed, Amy; a study worthy of Berghem or Cuyp. What exquisite perceptions of nature must they have had! their pictures and those of many of the same class, how simple! and yet painted with the most consummate art and nicest finish. Scarcely a flower escapes them, yet there is not one too many represented, nor one in any way interfering with the harmony of their colouring. I often long for such power; for we only can appreciate their skill and genius, by our own awkward attempts to imitate them. Indeed, when I look on the works of any of these great masters, my own appear so contemptible in my eyes, that I am tempted to forswear the gentle craft altogether."

"Indeed, you are to do no such thing, Herbert, but help me to sketch, and to blunder

on through many a drawing yet. I have no idea of being put out of conceit of my own performances, for which I have a high respect, I assure you. But come, if we stay loitering by every old beech-tree and group of sheep or deer, I shall get no sketch done in time for you to copy on my drawing, and shall be obliged perhaps to listen to some terrible excuses of duty or business. So come, we have yet a good way to walk."

Beguiling the way, little more than a quarter of a mile, by gentle converse upon familiar, yet to them interesting subjects, they reached the busy, murmuring river,—now stealing quietly under a bank,—now chafed in its passage over a few stones,—here eddying past a rock and covered with white foam,—there widening out into a little pool, partly natural, partly artificial, the glassy surface of which was broken into circles by the rapid rising of the trout, which eagerly leaped after the flies that sported upon it.

There was a small pathway beside the stream which had been the work of all the boys some years ago; in some places it wound

through thickets of alder and hazel, which met above it, forming a green alcove impervious to the sun; again, under some mossy bank or wide-spreading ash, where a rustic seat had been erected. Further as it advanced, it led round a projecting bank to a little open bay surrounded by rocks, one of which jutted out boldly into the stream that brawled noisily past it; and the open space, once a level spot of greensward, had been laid out irregularly in a little garden, which now bloomed with many sweet and beautiful flowers, of kinds despised perhaps nowadays, but not the less lovely for all that. Tall hollyhocks there were, and roses; and honeysuckles had been trained up against the rocks, with jessamine, clematis and other creepers, which poured forth their fragrance on the air.

Many a time had the little circles of Beechwood and Alston united here, and many a joyous pic-nic and dance had occupied hours which could never be forgotten by any.

It was a lovely spot indeed; the rocky bank around the little circle was, as we have said, covered with creepers; festoons of ivy hung from

above, and over all nodded some ash or other forest-trees, mingled with underwood and fern. On the opposite side of the river, worn away by the water which had run past it for countless years, the bank was high and steep, covered with ivy and drooping fern ; all sorts of little peering wild-flowers lurked among its recesses, with mosses whose colours glistened like emerald and gold ; above it grew two or three noble ashes and beeches, whose feathery foliage descended in minute and graceful sprays down to the bank, and waved with every breath of wind.

A tiny summer-house, or hermitage as they had called it, made of pine-logs and thatched with heath, stood in the corner formed by the projection round which they were passing ; and thither they directed their steps, for it commanded a view of the whole of the little amphitheatre, the rock, the river, and the bank beyond. Though there was a kind of garden, yet there was nothing artificial in its appearance ; the few flowers looked almost like the spontaneous growth of the spot, and did not interfere with the perfectly wild yet beautiful

character of the scene, which otherwise was as nature in one of her bountiful moods had fashioned and left it,—a nook wherein man might worship her the more devoutly. The whole glowed under the bright beams of the noonday sun, and there was not a breath of wind to disturb the complete serenity and dreamy effect of the place.

"Now sit down here, Herbert," said Amy, "and begin yonder by that ivy. You are to draw me all the jutting rock, the water eddying round it, the reeds here by the brink, and give me a bit of distance beyond; and I do not think," she added with enthusiasm, "that the world could show a lovelier spot today than our little hermitage. I only wish I could grasp it all, and put it upon my paper as I see it: do not you often feel so?"

"Indeed I do, Amy, and am vexed at my own clumsy attempts to imitate nature; but I will do my best for you today. I may not soon again have such an opportunity."

"You mean there will not be such another delicious day, Herbert; but I do not despair now of the weather."

Herbert was silent; he had thought his remark might have led to the subject he did not know how to break. He looked at his companion, and he felt how hard it would be to leave one so beautiful, nay so loved as she was. He had never spoken to her of love; but now the hour approached when he was to leave her, and there were feelings within him struggling for expression which he could ill restrain; his thoughts oppressed him, and though he continued to sketch he was silent.

"You are very dull and absent today, Herbert," she said at length, as she continued looking over his shoulder; "but you are drawing that foliage and the old rock very nicely, so I must not scold you;" and again she continued to converse. She tried many topics, she spoke eloquently and feelingly of her boundless love of nature, she told him what she had been reading, asked him a thousand questions about his duties, his regiment, his companions,—all of which he answered mechanically; for his heart was too busy for him to heed the replies his tongue gave.

"Upon my word, I do not know what to

make of you today, Herbert," she cried laughing, as he had given some absurd reply to one of her questions or sallies which was not in any way relative to it. "You draw most meritoriously, and better than ever I saw you before, but my words fall on heedless ears; for I am sure you have neither heard or understood a word of what I have been saying this hour past. Now make haste,—a few touches will finish that, and you can add figures afterwards if you like. I am sure you are unwell. If you are so, I insist on your giving up the drawing."

"I shall never again have such an opportunity, dear Amy," he said; "not at least for a long time, so I had better do all I can now." There was much sadness in his tone.

"What do you mean by that? this is the second time I have heard you say it," she replied anxiously; "you surely cannot be going to leave us again; the regiment has only been here two months, and—tell me, I beseech you, Herbert," she continued as he looked up from the drawing, and distress was very visible upon his countenance; "tell me what you have to say. Why do you look so sad?"

"Because, dear Amy, I have news which will pain you,—that is, I think it will,—for we have ever been so linked together: you have guessed the truth,—I am indeed to leave,—and that so soon that my own brain is confused by the sudden orders we have received."

She turned as pale as death, and her lips quivered; all the misery and danger she had ever heard of foreign service rushed at once overwhelmingly into her thoughts. She tried to speak, but could not.

"It must be told sooner or later," he thought, laying down the sketch and drawing towards her; he continued, though with much difficulty in preserving his composure,—

"The regiment is ordered upon service, Amy, and after many thoughts I find I have no alternative but to accompany it. We march for Dover in a few days; the transports we hear will meet us there; and after we have embarked, the convoy fleet for India will join us at Portsmouth or Plymouth."

"For India!" were the only words the poor girl could utter, as she sunk helpless and fainting upon the seat.

CHAPTER X.

"Amy, dear Amy!" cried the young man, agonized by her bitter sobs, which ceased not, though he had raised her up, and supporting her hardly sensible form strove to console her, but in vain. "Amy, speak to me! one word, only one word, and you will be better: call me by my name—anything—only do not look so utterly wretched, nor sob so bitterly. God knows I have enough to bear in leaving you so suddenly, but this misery is worst of all. Dear Amy, look up! say that you will try to conquer this, and I shall have the less to reproach myself with for having told you of so much." But she spoke not; she could not utter one word for the choking sensation in her

throat. She passed her hand over it often, tried in vain to swallow, and gasped in the attempt.

"Good God, you are ill!" exclaimed Herbert hurriedly; "what can be done? what can I get? My own Amy!—dearest, dearest!—do not look so." But his entreaties were of no avail against her overpowering grief; she had struggled with the hysterical feeling till she could no longer oppose it, and yielded to its influence.

Distracted, Herbert knew not what to do. Aid there was none nearer than the house, and he could not leave her,—he dared not. He raised her gently, and bore her like a child to the river's brink. He unloosed her bonnet, and sprinkled water on her face; it revived her; and after some time and difficulty he succeeded in making her drink a little from his closed hands.

She recovered gradually, but lay sobbing still bitterly upon the grass, weakened and exhausted by the violence of her emotions. Herbert continued to hang over her in the greatest anxiety, and to implore her to speak in the tenderest epithets. He had not discovered how dear she was to him till he had heard his

fate; and he had tried to argue himself out of the belief, but without avail. His high sense of honour then came to his aid, and he thought that it would be wrong to declare such feelings to her when he might never return; and fervently as he loved her, he could have spared her the bitterness of that lingering hope which is so akin to despair.

But in those moments he had forgotten all; thoughts of the past and for the future, all centred in intense affection for the helpless being before him, whose artless mind had not attempted any disguise of her devoted love for her companion of so many years.

At last she recovered sufficiently to raise herself up; and this, the first sign of consciousness she had given, was rapture to Herbert. He bent down to her, and attempted to lift her to her feet. She was passive in his hands, even as a weak child; and partly supporting, partly carrying her, he led her to the hermitage. There he seated her on the rustic bench, and kneeling down beside her, while one arm was passed round her,—for she could not have sat alone without support,—he poured forth with

the impetuosity and tenderness of his disposition his vows of love, and his entreaties for some token that he had not angered her by his abruptness.

"But one word, my Amy! but one word, dearest!—one word, that in those far distant lands I may feed on it in my heart, while your beautiful face is present to my imagination. Dearest, we have loved each other with more than children's love from infancy; we have never expressed it, but now the trial has come, and you will not be the one to deny yours at such a time. Oh! Amy, speak to me one word to assure me that I may call you mine for ever."

Much more he said, and more passionately, but her hand was not withdrawn from his, nor did she remove herself from him. A tear at last forced its way from her closed eyelids, for she dared not to open them. Soon others followed; they fell hot and fast upon his hand for a little while; and at length, as she strove to speak, but could not, she was no longer able to control her emotion, and she fell upon his neck and wept aloud.

The young man strained her to his heart,

and as he wiped the fast-falling tears from her eyes, he poured such consolation as he could find words to utter into her perturbed heart. She did not question his love,—she had no doubt of that; but there was one all-engrossing thought—his absence—beneath which even her light and joyous spirit quailed; and while it caused her to shiver in very apprehension of perils which her thoughts could not define, she clung the closer to him, and strove to shut out the evils with which her mental visions were overcast.

The trying test of coming absence, of dangers to be braved, hardships to be endured, had at once broken down all barriers of formality, and opened to them the state of each other's affections in that perfect confidence, that pure reliance,—the gentle growth of years it is true,—but which had at once expanded without a check, and would endure for ever.

Who can tell the exquisite pleasure of such a first embrace? pure love, such as theirs, had little of the dross of passion in it. The knowledge that years must elapse ere they could meet again, the silent dread that it might never

be, put a thought of possession far from them; and in the perfect purity and ecstasy of feeling of those moments,—in the indulgence of thoughts, new, yet so inexpressibly sweet to them,—it is no wonder in that sequestered and lovely spot, that hours should have passed, and time should have been unheeded; nor was it until the lengthened shadows warned them of the decline of the day, that they could speak of parting or of the object of their visit.

The sketch had lain on the ground unheeded. Amy took it up. "It will be to me the silent witness of what has this day happened," she said, "and the dearest treasure I possess, Herbert, when you are gone from me. Now one little favour I beg, that you will sketch in ourselves, — me, as I lay fainting on the bank yonder, and you as you bent over me; for I think it was there and then I first heard you say you loved me, Herbert. To me it will be a comfort and a solace till you return, and then we will come here together, and you shall see that not a shrub or flower has been altered. Four years you said, dearest! they will soon pass, and I confess I have

hope beyond what I thought I should ever have possessed. Four years! methinks in anticipation they are already gone, and we sit here,—you a bronzed soldier with a thousand tales for me to hear, and I will sit at your feet and listen, your unchanged and unchangeable Amy."

Herbert regarded her with intense admiration, for her sadness had passed away; and though tears trembled in her bright eyes with every word she spoke, there was a joyous tone in her voice and in her expression; and his spirit caught that hope from hers which, under other circumstances, would have been denied him.

"Willingly, most willingly, dearest," he said, taking the drawing from her; and in a few moments he had sketched in the figures;—she, raising herself up, had recovered consciousness, and he, bending anxiously over her, had implored her to speak to him. There was such force and tenderness in the attitudes that it told the simple story at a glance.

"It is too plain, Herbert," she said half reproachfully; "I shall not dare to show any one

your boldest and by far most beautiful sketch; nay, you are even making a likeness of me, which is too bad; but I need not fear, for no one shall ever see it but myself. My last look shall be of it at night, and with that my last thought shall be with you. Now that is enough: I will not have another touch, lest you spoil it; give it me, let me carry it home, and miser-like lock it up from every one but myself."

"You may have it if you will, dearest, but I must beg it for tonight at least. I will make a small sketch from it, and will bring it over early tomorrow."

"It is only upon your promise not to keep it longer than tomorrow morning, that you may have it, Herbert. I am nearly inclined to make you stay at Beechwood to copy it, lest anything should befall it; but I am not selfish enough to detain you from those who love you as dearly as I do."

Slowly they retraced their steps through every bowery path and open glade; the blossoms of the lime and horse-chestnut filled the air with luscious sweetness, and their broad shadows were flung wide over the richly-co-

loured sward. They wandered on, hardly heeding the luxuriant beauty of the landscape, with their arms twined round each other, while they spoke in those gentle murmuring tones, which, though low, were yet distinct, and of which every word was striven to be remembered for years afterwards.

"My father must know all," said Amy, as they approached the house; "we have nothing to fear from him, and therefore nothing to conceal; but I dare not speak, Herbert, so—"

"I do not flinch from the trial, dearest," was his reply. "If you can bear it, I would rather you were present, but—"

"No, no, no! I could not bear it, Herbert," replied the blushing girl; "and I had better not be present I know, for we should both lose courage. No, you must tell all to papa and leave me to my own solitude for awhile, for indeed I require it. And now here we are at home; I need not say—for you know papa almost as well as I do—conceal nothing, for we have nothing to conceal."

She ran lightly on through the hall, and up the broad staircase. Herbert followed her beau-

tiful figure till he could see it no longer; then listened till he heard the door of her chamber close after her. "She has gone to pray for herself and me," he thought, and thought truly. The study-door was before him; his heart beat very fast, and his hand almost trembled as he placed it upon the handle; but his resolution was made in an instant, and he passed in.

Mr. Hayward laid down the book he had been reading, and took the spectacles from his nose, as Herbert entered. "You are a pretty pair of truants," he said cheerfully; "an hour or two indeed! why 'tis just six o'clock! and where is Amy?"

"She is gone to her room, sir, for a short time; she said she would not be long absent."

"And what have you been about? come, let me see. You know I am a great admirer of your spirited sketches, Herbert; so hand me your day's work, which ought to be an elaborate affair, considering the time you have been about it." And he replaced his spectacles.

Herbert blushed crimson; he felt his face glowing painfully: he had forgotten the roll of paper, which he had kept in his hand, and he

could not deny that it was the sketch Mr. Hayward wished to see. He hesitated a little, grew somewhat indecisive in his speech; and, as the old gentleman was beginning to suspect the truth, Herbert had told all, and stood before him glowing with manly emotion and proud feelings of rectitude. There was nothing to conceal, Amy had said, so he concealed nothing. He told him how he had intended not to have spoken to her; but how, overcome by the anguish of seeing her so prostrated by grief, he had revealed to her all his feelings, even at the risk of her displeasure. "Amy loves me, sir," he continued proudly; "nor does she seek to deny it. We have too long shared each other's thoughts for any reserve to exist between us; and to you we fearlessly commit ourselves, in frank confession of our fault, if we have committed any."

Mr. Hayward only mused for a moment; he loved Herbert too well, and had known him too long, to hesitate. "May God bless you both, my dear boy!" he cried, rising from his chair, and extending his arms to embrace the young man. "May God bless you! If there

had not been this dreadful absence to contemplate, I should have counted this one of the happiest moments of my life; as it is, I am thankful that Amy is loved by such an one as you, Herbert; but where is she? I can remain no longer without seeing you together." He rang the bell.

"Tell Miss Hayward that I want her here as soon as possible," said the old gentleman to the servant.

A few minutes only elapsed, during which neither spoke. At last her light footstep was heard on the stairs: descending slowly it passed over the hall so lightly that even Herbert's ear could hardly detect it; he fancied it hesitated at the door, and he flew to open it; and the smile of joy—of triumph—which met her hurried glance, served in some measure to assure her; her father stood with open arms, and lips quivering with emotion. "God bless you! God bless you!" was all he could utter, as she rushed into them, and, sobbing, hid her burning face in his bosom; nor did she venture to withdraw it for long, nor he to disturb her; the gush of joy which welled from his heart,

as he strained her to it, was too pure to relinquish easily.

"If I have been wrong, dear father, forgive me!" was all she was able to utter, after a silence of some moments.

"Nay, I have nothing to forgive, my sweet pet," he said; "I had looked for this happiness only as a consummation of my dearest wishes, and it is now as unexpected as grateful. But I will keep you no longer, Herbert," he said to him, "nor must Amy either, for there are others who have stronger claims upon you than we have, and I dare not detain you from them. I wish however, and Amy will second the wish I know, that you would come over tomorrow as early as you can, and give us a quiet day and evening together; it will be as much a source of gratification to you to dwell on when you are away, as it will be to us;—so say, will you come?"

At any time the invitation would have been welcome, but now the imploring looks of the fair girl were arguments which could not be resisted.

"I will be with you as early as I can," Her-

bert replied, "as soon as I can complete a task I have here, and I will not leave you till night; so for the present farewell, and I beg you to procure me the forgiveness, and I will add the blessing, of her whom I hope to call a second mother."

"You need have no doubts," said Mr. Hayward; "you have nothing to apprehend, but, on the contrary, I can assure you that this subject will be one of great delight to her; so once more, God bless you!"

Amy followed him to the hall-door, apparently to shut it after him, but she passed out with him, after a moment's coquetting with the handle. "You will not fail, dear Herbert? I could not bear disappointment now," she said to him, her eyes filling and sparkling like violets with dew-drops hanging in them.

"Not for worlds would I give you one moment's pain, dearest; fear not, I shall be with you soon after noon tomorrow. Good bye, and God bless you!"

Perhaps it was that they had approached very nigh each other as they spoke, and he could not resist the tempting opportunity, or

perhaps,—but it is of no use to speculate,—certain it is that he drew her to him gently, and imprinted one fervent kiss on her lips: she did not chide him, but felt the more cheerful afterwards that she had received it.

Herbert hurried home, and instantly sought his parents; he told them all, nor concealed from them one thought by which he had been actuated, nor one struggle against his love which he had failed to overcome. They were both much affected, for indeed it was a solemn thing to contemplate the plighting of their son's faith with Amy, on the eve of such a separation. Yet they were gratified; and in their prayers that night, and ever afterwards, they commended the beloved pair to the guardianship and protection of Him whom they worshiped in spirit and in truth.

CHAPTER XI.

The morrow came—a bright and joyous day, on which the spirit of beauty and of love revelled in every natural creation, and was abroad over the whole earth,—a day of dreamy, voluptuous repose, when one feels only fitted to hold silent converse with nature in intense admiration of the glorious perfection of her works.

The sun was almost overpoweringly bright, and the world abroad rejoiced in his beams. Man everywhere should have rejoiced too; yet there were some hearts which his effulgence could not illumine, which his cheering influence could not enliven. The breakfast-table at the Rectory was a silent one, where heretofore all had been joyous and cheerful; for it was useless to struggle against the grief

which pervaded the whole family. Mr. Compton and Herbert strove the most manfully and with best success to cheer the rest and themselves, but Mrs. Compton dared not look at any one; and she sat silently, with quivering lips, and eyes filled with tears, of which she was unconscious, except as those drops, starting from the pure fountain of a mother's love, ran down upon her cheek, and were hastily brushed away. Her eyes were now fixed upon vacancy, and again wandered to her son, and were withdrawn only when it became agony to repress the emotion she felt.

Who can fathom the depth of a mother's love for such a son, one on whom she had doated, even to weakness, from his birth? We dare not attempt to depict it, nor can it be expressed; but it has been felt by millions, and will continue to be so while the tenderest and holiest feelings of love are continued as blessings to us.

Herbert fulfilled his appointment faithfully: ere he had passed the little bridge many paces, the maiden met him, for she had long sat and watched for him; and they strolled on, away

through the most sequestered glades of the park, resting at whiles on hillocks of thyme and mossy banks, which courted occupation as they wandered by. Time flew lightly, and in that perfect bliss which can be only known once,—so pure are the sensations, that the heart does not hope to feel them again; and which, if once enjoyed, remain indelibly impressed upon it for ever.

They wandered on; they had no thought for anything around them, no eyes to behold beauties, except in the luxury of their own thoughts. Their minds were like stringed instruments in perfect unison,—each touch by the one was responded to by the other with harmony. They spoke of the future with confidence, with that pure hope only known to the young who have never felt the agony of hope deferred. There was no cloud now over their bright future. Four years! to look back on it was nothing; they could remember the occurrences of four years ago as though they were yesterday, and those to come they thought would pass as fast.

He spoke to her of the gorgeous East, of the temples, the palaces, the almost fairy-land he was

to see, and they pictured to themselves a land so bright and fair that they longed to roam over it in company. He promised her letters, —not cold formal ones written at a sitting, but daily records of his thoughts, and minute descriptions of the varied scenes he should pass through. He promised sketches too, by every opportunity, of everything about him,—of his tent, his room, even of his table where he should sit and hold conversations with her in writing, as well as of the scenery and magnificent remains of the country.

And in this exquisite converse all care for the time had passed away from them; for though the feeling of parting did often float through their minds, yet it would have been hard had it been allowed to damp the buoyancy of two such naturally cheerful hearts as theirs; and they entered the drawing-room of Beechwood together, glowing with such pleasure, and with such joyous expressions upon their faces, that Mrs. Hayward, who had been long waiting for them, and had expected a far different scene, was affected with joy instead of sorrow; and though the result was much the

same, yet her equanimity was soon restored, and the hearty blessing and greeting she gave the pair, as they advanced to receive it, gratified her benevolent and loving heart.

Herbert staid with them till the night was far spent; there was perfect confidence and perfect love among the party; and if these are seldom vouchsafed together in life's pilgrimage, they make the period of that intercourse so marked in its purity of character that it is the better appreciated and the longer remembered.

But sadness came at length,—the dreaded day of departure drew nigh;—the Sabbath, Herbert's last day with his parents, was held sacred by both families; and as they had now a common interest in him who was about to leave, they passed it together at the Rectory. There is little pleasure in dwelling upon a scene so sad,—in depicting the sorrow of those who were assembled. Mr. and Mrs. Hayward did the utmost their kind hearts could suggest to comfort their friends, and in some measure succeeded; but the time passed heavily, the conversation, however it was directed, only tended to the same point,—but that was too painful a one to be

discussed freely, and was only alluded to with difficulty. Mrs. Compton tried in vain to sit out the evening in the drawing-room, and at length was obliged to retire to her own chamber, where she was followed and tended by her friend and Amy with true affection.

Poor Amy! she had a hard part to bear. To conceal her own miserable feelings, in order that she might not be an additional weight upon the already oppressed spirits of others, was a task she was barely equal to; yet she strove, and strove well to master her grief, and to all appearance hers was the only light heart of the party. Herbert had promised to accompany her home through the park, so that she would be spared the misery of bidding him farewell before others, even though they might be her own parents, and this also consoled her.

In their evening worship Mr. Compton took occasion to allude to Herbert's departure; his prayer was beautiful and simple, and in fervent supplication he earnestly commended him to the Almighty's care and protection. The bitter sobs of Mrs. Compton could throughout be heard above his own tremulous voice, but he

persevered manfully, and all of that assembly arose more calm and more reconciled to what was now inevitable.

Mr. Hayward's carriage was soon afterwards at the door; it was announced in the drawing-room, and he and Mrs. Hayward arose to depart. They were both deeply affected; as may well be imagined Herbert was so too, and spoke with difficulty; but they blessed him, and gave him their fervent wishes for success, and a safe return within the time he had appointed, as warmly as if he had been one of their own children.

"I have only one last favour to beg, dear Mrs. Hayward," he said, as he handed her into the carriage, "that you will allow Amy to walk home under my escort; I shall feel very thankful, if you will consent."

"I will not refuse you, Herbert," she said: "be gentle to her, for she loves you very deeply; never disappoint her in writing, for I am well convinced your letters will be her life while you are away. I will endeavour to make every allowance for the delay which needs must occur in the transmission of letters from such

a distance; but still you must be punctual and regular. Remember, these are my last and only commands upon you; take Amy with you now, but do not keep her out late, for the dews are heavy, and may hurt you both. Now God bless you!"

"My letters shall be my best answers to your commands," said Herbert; "believe me, I shall not miss a single opportunity of sending many to you all, for you will never be absent from my thoughts. The time will soon pass, and I hope and trust we shall all again be re-united in this dear spot:—till then good bye! good bye!"

"Mrs. Hayward says I may escort Amy home through the park, sir," said Herbert to Mr. Hayward, who was following; "we shall hardly lose our way in this beautiful moonlight, and I hope you have no objection."

"Not if you promise you will not be late, Herbert; but I leave her to your own discretion; I have not the heart to part you tonight; so farewell, my brave boy! I trust we shall see you back soon a colonel at least; you will not forget to write punctually, as well for our sake as for Amy's."

"I have already promised Mrs. Hayward that," said Herbert, "and most faithfully will I fulfil it."

"Then I will say no more, but again farewell, and God bless you!"

He wrung Herbert's hand warmly, and with cordial sincerity, and stepping into the carriage, it drove rapidly away.

"Now, dearest," said Herbert, "at least we have a few moments which we can call our own,—moments to be the food of years; when every word, however trivial, that one has uttered, will be to the other the most precious in the stock of our hearts' remembrances. Come, let us stroll gently on."

She took his arm, and they wandered onwards towards the Park. The moon was nigh the full, and her bright orb shed a mellow light on all around. A few fleecy clouds floated near her in the deep blue heaven, but not enough to dim her lustre, and her beams illuminated while they softened every object in the well-known pathway.

The perfect silence which reigned around them, only broken at intervals by the faint tinkling of the sheep-bells here and there, or the feeble bleat

of a lamb, was soothing to them; and the wide glades of the park, seen dimly in the distance, appeared to melt away into air, more like the momentary visions of dreams than the realities they had been accustomed to for years. They had much to say to each other; for they were young, ardent, confiding,—loving with the intenseness of a first and sincere attachment, the gentle growth of years; yet theirs was not the language of passion, but those sobered, chastened, and now sorrowful feelings, which were the result at once of their long attachment and their dread of parting; and they lingered on, nor knew how swiftly time was flying, and that their sad farewell must be spoken at last. They walked up to the house several times, and thought to leave each other; but always some new word was spoken, some train of thought aroused, which carried them away again, forgetful of their promises not to delay.

Nor could Amy's buoyant heart support her to the last as it had done through the day,—indeed through the last few days; bitter were her sobs as she clung to the manly form of him she loved,—bitter and more violent, as the clock

of the out-offices struck an hour—she did not, could not count it,—which seemed to be a last warning to her to leave him; she almost longed to do so, and yet had not the power; nor could Herbert bring himself to utter the wish for her to go.

They stood before the hall-door, irresolute, as the clock struck; and gently, in as soothing words as he could frame his thoughts to utterance, he reminded her of his promise to her mother and of her strict injunctions. "It was only from my promise that we have enjoyed these exquisite moments," he said, "and I would not vex her, Amy." But still they lingered; she was helpless as a child, her tears fell very fast, and convulsive sobs shook her sadly. Herbert supported her with one arm, while he wiped away her tears, and kissed the beautiful face which, upturned to his, had lost its cheerful expression, and now wore one of such mental anguish as had never before visited it, that he almost reproached himself for having caused it. It required all his self-possession to restrain a violent outbreak of passionate emotion; for his heart was full even to

bursting, and could he have shed tears, he thought it would have relieved him, but they were denied him. They could speak but little; all he could utter were words of consolation, which, repeated again and again almost unintelligibly, fell on heedless ears, for the misery of her mind repelled them. But it could not last; sooner or later he must leave her, and he felt that every moment was causing her additional pain, while no immediate alleviation could follow.

He drew her gently towards the door; she understood his meaning, and acquiesced, by making no resistance; they ascended the steps together; the door had been left unfastened on purpose to receive her, and he felt this delicate mark of kindness in her parents deeply; it seemed even to comfort Amy that she should be able to reach her chamber unobserved.

"Go and pray for me, as you pray for yourself, dearest! it will soothe you more than my words or feeble consolations," he said, as opening the door he led her within it; "soon I will join my prayers to yours, and ascending together to Him who is alone able to grant

them, they will bring us that peace which indeed passes understanding. Go! may He who looks down from yonder bright and glorious heaven upon us, bless you for ever, my angel, and keep you in safety!"

He could not add more, nor did she dare to reply, though some indistinct murmurs escaped her; he clasped her to his heart in one ardent embrace; kissed her forehead—her eyes—her lips in passionate fervour; and then disengaging her from him,—for she did not, could not oppose it,—he led her softly within the hall; and not daring to hazard a second glance upon her, he gently closed the door, and with an almost bursting heart rushed from the house.

He did not go far thus. Nature, who will not be denied vent for such bitter feelings as his were, and which had been so long and so ill repressed, demanded relief; and overcome by emotion, his temples throbbing as though they would burst, with a choking sensation in his throat, which caused him to breathe with difficulty, he threw himself upon a rustic seat by the side of the walk. For awhile the

agony he suffered was almost insupportable, but afterwards a passionate burst of tears, which he could not check or repress, came to his relief. He leaned his head upon his hand and sobbed bitterly for many minutes; but he arose at last, in some degree soothed by the effort nature had made to relieve the sorrow which had well nigh overpowered him.

Herbert left his home the next morning amidst the unrestrained and bitter grief of all. All his mother's previous resolutions failed her; for awhile she refused to be comforted; dread, that he was going from her for ever, oppressed her with a weight which she could not throw off by the most strenuous mental exertions. Mr. Compton strove to console her, and Herbert was as cheerful as he could be under the circumstances. But it was all of no use; deep affection would find its vent, and no wonder, when all had been so knit together in the ties of love as that family.

But after breakfast, which they had vainly tried to eat, and the viands which had been provided remained untasted upon the table, the carriage was announced. To each of his

brothers and his younger sisters Herbert bade a tender farewell, promising them all sorts of presents and drawings from eastern climates; but who shall paint his last moments with his dear and honoured mother? it would be profanation of such feelings to attempt their delineation—they can be felt only, never described. Mute with sorrow, Mrs. Compton could not speak to him, as he folded her in a last embrace; and as he tore himself from her, and hurried to the carriage, she tottered to the window, and supporting herself by the side panel, with eyes dim with weeping and now almost blinded by her tears, she watched him as long as sight of him was spared her. She saw him throw himself into the carriage—his father attending him to it—the door shut—the orders given to proceed; but ere the postilion could urge his horses forward, she had sunk senseless upon the ground.

The regiment marched that day towards Dover, where his father joined Herbert in a few days. Here they were detained only as long as was sufficient to provide the requisite necessaries to the regiment for a hot climate,

and the duties of furnishing these to his men kept Herbert continually employed. He had some idea at one time of returning home, even for a day or two, but the remembrance of the pangs which both his mother and Amy had suffered was too fresh in his mind to allow of his indulging in so selfish and indeed useless a gratification. He had his father with him, whose presence was not only a solace, but who prevented, as much as was in his power, Herbert's giving way to the grief which at times he could not repress, and which endured in despite of him.

At length the day arrived for the embarkation, and a gallant but painful sight it was to see so many brave fellows leaving their native land, their homes, their parents, children, and other perhaps dearer ties,—prepared to shed their blood in their country's cause,—to brave the perils of an unknown land and dangerous climate for her sake. Yet, as the regiment moved towards the pier from the barracks in open column, headed by their band, playing the most lively marches, to which the firm and measured tread of the men formed a noble ac-

companiment, there could not be seen a sorrowful face among the whole; for their colours were unfurled, and floated proudly to the breeze; and as each man's eye rested upon those emblems of their national honour which he had sworn to guard, it glistened with that undefinable sensation of glowing pride which soldiers only know, and feel most deeply on an occasion like this.

The regiment was attended by all the other officers of the garrison, and the inhabitants of the town, and was loudly cheered as they passed along. The boats waited beside the pier: each division was marched in an orderly manner into its respective boats, and at a signal given the oars were dipped at once, and the whole mimic fleet stretched at their utmost speed towards the ships, which lay at some distance from the shore.

Three hearty English cheers followed them, led regularly by an officer of distinction, who stood upon a capstan for the purpose; while the band of his corps, which was stationed upon the pier, played the slow march of the departing regiment with admirable expression. The

three cheers were as heartily returned from the boats, and the gallant corps sped quickly on to their vessels.

Mr. Compton accompanied his son on board, and staid as long as it was possible. The anchors of the fleet were a-peak, their topsails loosed, when they arrived on board; and when the men were somewhat settled, and order restored, the signal was made for sailing; soon the anchors were at the cat-heads, the topsails sheeted home, and the vast fabrics began their march over the deep, to be continued through storm or calm to the end. But as sail after sail was set, the vessels began to move the faster, until it was no longer possible to retain the boat which was towing astern, in which he was to return; he was aware that every indulgence had been shown him in having been allowed to remain so long, and he could make no opposition to its being ordered alongside.

"May He who alone is able to protect you, Herbert," he said, as he wrung his hand, "keep you in health! You go, I am well aware, to many dangers, but I leave you in confident

hope that we may meet again; and my most fervent supplications shall ever be for you. Be careful of yourself; you are strong, active, temperate,—blessings which you cannot prize too highly. And now embrace me, my dear boy—I dare speak no more."

He left the deck: Herbert watched him down the side safely into the boat; the rope was cast off, and in another instant it was dancing in the wake of the vessel astern; the boatmen set their sail, and soon the tiny bark was dancing merrily along over the waters. Herbert gazed till it became a speck, and then disappeared; but Mr. Compton saw the tall vessels, which had spread every sail to court a gentle and favourable wind, longer, and he watched the last faint glitter of their white canvas with straining eyes and an aching heart, till he could see them no longer upon the blue horizon.

* * * * *

We must now return to a point in our narrative from which we have very widely digressed, in order to put our readers in possession of what we have detailed of the history of

Herbert Compton; and we will return to the happy party which was assembled round the cheerful fire at Alston Rectory.

Besides the family, Amy was there; and, since the events we have detailed, she was often at Alston for days together: she was bright and joyous as ever, indeed much improved in personal appearance. Little more than a year had elapsed since Herbert had left them, but the letters he had written had been so regularly received, that the miserable apprehensions which all had indulged on his departure were completely dispelled; they knew that he was happy, and enjoyed excellent health, that he had formed pleasant friendships, and liked the country, which he described with eloquence. Still, as he had gone on service soon after his arrival, they were anxious, and looked eagerly for news.

"Come, let us have a glee, girls," said Mr. Compton, after a game of forfeits had been played with all its pleasant noisy fun, which seems now to have abandoned us; "come, we must have some music. Get you to the harpsichord, Amy, and I will help out my own bass with my violoncello."

"What shall we sing, sir?" answered Amy gaily, going at once to the instrument; "here are all kinds,—comic, lively, and grave. Ah! I have hit at once upon Herbert's favourite,—'When winds breathe soft.'"

"Very good; you could not have anything better; and we all know that your heart will be in your song:—but, let us see."

The parts were soon arranged; Amy led the glee, the delicious harmony of which appeared to float in the air above their heads, so perfectly was it sung by voices, excellent in themselves, and attuned by constant practice. Others followed; for as they had begun with glees, so they agreed to continue.

At last, after a pause, Mr. Compton, patting her cheek, said,—"Well, you have sung so well, Amy, that I think I shall have a letter for my pet tonight."

"A letter!—for me? Ah, sir, from whom? not from Herbert?"

"Indeed I hope so, my darling," added Mrs. Compton; "you know we were disappointed by the last packet, and Mr. Compton heard yesterday from his London agent, saying that a

Bombay vessel had arrived with letters, and that he would forward ours the next day."

"I am so happy! dear, dear Mrs. Compton," cried the joyful girl, throwing her arms around her, and kissing her, "I feel so very happy! And when will the letters come?"

"I expect the boy every moment with the bag," she replied; "he should have been here before this; but perhaps the post is late at ——— today, on account of the weather."

"Then we shall have a delightful evening, indeed," said Amy; "shall we not, boys and girls? Herbert's letters to all of you shall be read first, and then I will read just such scraps of mine as I please. You know how I love to tyrannize over you, and tempt you with a great deal that you must not see."

"Well, here is the bag!" cried Edward, taking it from the servant, who just then entered. "Now we shall see!" and he opened it. "What only one?—that is a disappointment! It is for you, father."

"Ah, from my agents I see; perhaps the letters have not been delivered; but we shall hear all about it." They crowded round him,

but poor Amy's heart sunk within her; she almost sickened lest there should be no news of Herbert.

"Dear Sir," read Mr. Compton, "we are sorry to inform you that there were no letters for you or for Miss Hayward, per Ocean from Bombay, and we are sorry to add that the general news is not so favourable as we could wish—"

"Look to Amy! look to Amy!" cried Mrs. Compton, suddenly and anxiously.

It was indeed necessary,—for she had fainted. It was long ere she recovered; she had naturally a powerful mind, but it had been suddenly, perhaps unadvisedly, excited; and when such disappointment ensued, she had not been able to bear up against it, the more so, as this was the second she had experienced within a short time, and there was no doubt from the previous public information, that severe fighting had been apprehended, in which Herbert's regiment must take a part.

In vain was it that Mr. and Mrs. Hayward tried to console her,—they had felt the disappointment as keenly as Amy; for the time,

therefore, all were sad, and the evening which had begun so cheerfully, was concluded in painful and almost silent apprehension; nor did the accounts which appeared in the newspapers some days afterwards, convey to them any alleviation of their fears.

CHAPTER XII.

It is now necessary to revisit Abdool Rhyman Khan and his party, whom we left at a small village in the pass leading behind Pencondah, and in their company to travel awhile through those districts which lay between them and the city whither they were bound.

There were no dangers now in their path, no attacks from Mahrattas to be apprehended, nor was there the irksome heat which oppressed and wearied them before. A few showers had already fallen, the earth had put on its verdant covering, and travelling was now a pleasure more than a fatigue. The Khan had intended proceeding by easy stages, but the news he had heard of rumours of fresh wars, of the personal activity of Tippoo among the army, which was always the forerunner of some campaign, made

him more than usually solicitous to press forward.

So on the fifth day they were at Balapoor; and leaving the lady to the care of the servants to rest for awhile, the Khan, accompanied by Kasim, rode forward to the town and fort of Nundidroog, where he knew some of his own men were stationed.

"Do you see that pile of rocks yonder?" said the Khan to Kasim, as they rode along.

"I do; why do you ask?"

"Because," he replied, "that is a place well worth seeing, and one which was a rare favourite of Hyder Ali's,—may his memory be honoured!"

"Why? had he a summer-house there?

"Yes, there is a sort of house there, to be sure," returned the Khan laughing; "but not one of pleasure, I should think. Many a poor wretch has been in it, who would have given the wealth of the world, had he possessed it, to have got out again."

"It is a prison then?"

"It is, and one from which but few return alive."

"How so? you do not mean to say that they are murdered?"

"I mean to tell you plainly, that you had better not get into it; few of our people have ever been sent there, for it is reserved for the kafir English—may their tribe be accursed!—and a few of them are now and then thrown from the top, to terrify the rest into submission to the Sultaun's will, and to become a feast for the kites and crows. Look! I suppose some of them have been cast over lately, for there are vultures wheeling in the air overhead, and making stoops as if they would alight."

Kasim shuddered; he thought it a base death for any one to die, to be thrown from thence,—to reach the bottom haply alive!—and to be left to struggle there maimed and helpless,—to linger till death came, accelerated perhaps by the jackals or vultures.

"Have you ever seen this, Khan?" asked Kasim.

"Never, but I know those who have: the office of executioner is no enviable one to a soldier; and he who has this post, though as arrant a coward as can well be in the field, yet

can stand by and see brave men hurled over these rocks; for, to do them justice, the English are brave as lions and their courage cannot be quelled: we learned that at Perambaukum, to our cost."

"Ay, I have heard of that. Report states it to have been a good battle."

"Mashalla! you may say so; and, blessed be Alla! the arms of the true believers were victorious over the infidels; yet they fought well, and, though a handful of men, defied our utmost attacks and continued charges."

"Then you were there, Ali Khan?"

"Yes,—I was then in the Pagha,—the Royal Guard; and I was desired by Hyder (peace be on his name!) to protect Tippoo Sahib, who led the charges. He fought like a tiger as he is, and many of the infidels tasted of death at his hand; but one of them, as we charged and overthrew their last square, made a thrust with his bayonet at the young prince, which,—praise to Mahomed!—I parried; and in return, caused him to taste of death. The young man never forgot that deed, and some others I was

fortunate enough to perform before him, and I am what I am."

"Then, like those of his rank, he does not forget benefits?"

"Never: he is faithful to those he loves, but a bitter foe to those who provoke him. Above all, the English are his detestation; he sees their restless love of intrigue and power; he knows how they have sown dissensions in Bengal, and wrested many fair provinces from the sway of the true believers; he fears their abilities and knowledge of the arts of war; and though he has some French in his service, yet he can see plainly enough that they have not the powers of the others either to contrive or to execute. Above all, he fears the prophecy about him by a holy man whom he consulted, which no doubt you have heard."

"No, indeed, I have not."

"Not heard that? Ajaib! it is very strange; but how could you, after all. Know then, that as he sat one day in one of the innermost apartments of the palace in the garden of the Deria Doulut,—where no one could by any possibility

have access to him, and where he was engaged in study,—there was heard a voice conversing with him, and his was gradually raised till it became furious, as, Inshalla! it often does, to the terror of his enemies."

"Taajoob!" exclaimed Kasim, "who was it?"

"Willa alum! (God knows)," replied the Khan. "But listen: it is said the Mushaek*—for so he appeared to be—cried to him with a loud voice, and bade him beware of the English Feringhees, for they were plotting against him; and that though the day was far distant, yet danger threatened him from them which could not be avoided. Then some say that the being (may Alla forgive me if he hears it!) upbraided the Sultaun with many errors of faith, and with being given to idolatry in private, and with doing magic, to the hurt of his own soul; an it was this which made him so angry."

"And who was it after all?"

"Alla knows!" said the Khan mysteriously; "Alla knows! Some people say it was a Fakeer named Shah Yoonoos, who had wandered in unknown to anybody, and had reached the

* Holy man.

Sultaun's chamber; but others say it was one of the spirits of the air (over whom it is known he has power) who had taken that form to visit him by day. But Alla only knows the truth, after all. Certain it is, however, that he does perform rites which I, as a humble and pious Mahomedan, would object to."

"Did no one try to seize the intruder?"

"Many, so it is said; but he passed forth from among them all, and has not been seen since."

"Most extraordinary, certainly! I marvel not now, Khan, that he should be so suspicious of the English. I for one long to have a blow with them, and to see how they fight."

"Inshalla! the opportunity will not be long wanting; you will have it ere you have been long with us. But among our people here we shall learn something, for they have always the quickest information from the capital."

Shortly afterwards they rode into the outer court of the Temple of Nundi, at the town under the fort of Nundidroog, and the scene which presented itself to the eyes of Kasim was as novel as it was interesting.

The court was a large square, contained in a sort of piazza formed by a colonnade of huge square blocks of granite placed in three rows, about twelve feet asunder, each piece probably sixteen feet in height; across these at the top, to form a roof, were transverse pieces of equal length. The spaces between the pillars thus placed, formed excellent stalls for horses, and the enormous area was thus converted into one huge stable,—where of old the Brahmin priests had wandered, dispensing charitable aid to the wretched, or instructing those who thirsted for knowledge.

In the centre were a few gay tents, and many camels were sitting and standing around them; several elephants too were busied with huge piles of leafy branches before them, selecting the tenderest morsels, and brushing away flies with others. Around were groups of men,—some lying under a rude screen, formed of three spears tied together, with a cloth thrown over them; others lounging and swaggering about, gaily dressed, and armed to the teeth; many were gathered into knots, and, either sitting upon spread carpets or standing together, were

occupied in smoking, or listening to some itinerant musicians or story-tellers. In various parts were little booths, where coarse confectionary was sold; and many a portly-bellied group of money-changers, with their keen and shrewd eyes, were sitting on the ground, naked to the waist, with heaps of courees and pice* spread before them. There were women selling fruit out of baskets and sacks, others hawking about sour curds; with a thousand other busy, bustling occupations going on with vigour, for which the presence of the cavalry found full employment.

Before them, and above the piazzas, appeared the richly ornamented and curious high pyramidical roofs of the temples, and their massive and decorated gateway; and above all frowned the bare rock of the fort,—a naked mass of about eight hundred feet perpendicular, arising from a rugged and woody slope of an equal height. The walls around the summit, which were built upon the very giddy verge, were bristling with cannon, and the numbers of men about showed that it possessed many defenders.

* Copper coin.

All these objects, assisted by the bright colours of the costumes, the caparisons of the horses, camels and elephants, some of which were already equipped for travel, formed a picture which, glowing under the slanting beams of an afternoon sun, caused the young man's heart to bound with delight as they entered the large square and rode onwards among the motley crowd.

"What think you of my fine fellows, Kasim?" said the Khan, as they passed various groups of stout, soldier-like men. "Inshalla! they are worth looking at."

"Ul-humd-ul-illa! they most truly are," replied the young man, who was, to say the truth, somewhat bewildered by the excitement of the scene. "And do you really command all these, O Khan?"

"Most of them I dare say are my youths, Kasim; but I have no doubt some of the garrison of the fort are here also, and it would be difficult to distinguish them. But these are not all; Mashalla! and praise to the Sultaun's bounty, we have as many more at least—nay, three times as many—at the city. But there is

surely more activity than usual going on, and this looks marvellously like the preparations for a march; so let us press on to the tent yonder, for there shall we find Hubeeb Oolla Khan, or Shekh Jaffur Sahib, my Jemadars, who will answer my queries. I marvel none of my rogues have yet found me out."

"Why they can hardly see your face, Khan," said Kasim; "and I dare say they little expect you to drop as it were from the clouds thus suddenly among them."

"Perhaps not; but here we are at the tent: dismount, and let us enter together."

As he spoke, the Khan alighted, and unfolding the muslin scarf which had been tied about his face, he was instantly recognised by a number of the men who were lounging about in front of it, and who now crowded round him with congratulations.

"The Khan Sahib is come!" shouted several to their companions.

"My lord's footsteps are welcome!" cried those who were nearest. "Inshalla! victory waits upon them."

"It is a fortunate hour that has brought

him," cried another, who pressed forward, and bowed before him. "What are my lord's wishes? let him order his slave Dilawur Ali to perform them."

"Ha! art thou there, friend?" said the Khan. "Well, since thou wishest for employment, go on, and tell the Jemadar Sahib that I am here. Which of the officers is with you?"

"Jaffur Sahib, Khodawund! he will have rare news for my lord;" and he departed.

"This looks like a march," said the Khan to another: "say, is it so?"

"It is, protector of the poor! but we know but little of the true cause as yet, though many rumours are afloat; the most prevalent is—"

But here he was interrupted by the Jemadar himself, who had hurried from his tent, and now advanced towards them. The two leaders embraced cordially.

"Ul-humd-ul-illa! you are welcome, Khan Sahib," said Jaffur; "but do not remain here: come, I pray you, to your servant's tent, and rest after your journey."

He went in, and was soon seated upon the soft cushions of the Jemadar's musnud. Kasim

followed, but, uncertain how to act, he continued standing, until he was desired by the Khan to be seated near him. This, together with the Khan's marked attention to the young man, appeared rather to disconcert the Jemadar, who regarded the new-comer with some suspicion, and Kasim could not help imagining with some dislike. I shall have an enemy in this man, thought Kasim for an instant; but again, he reflected that he had nothing to fear, and soon ceased to regard the furtive looks of the Jemadar, which were cast upon him from time to time, as the Khan appealed to him in support of his opinions or remarks during the conversation, which naturally turned upon the movements of the corps of cavalry he commanded.

It was true that the corps was about to move: all the outposts, except a few of those immediately upon the Mahratta frontier, had been called in, and had joined within the past day or two; and the morrow had been fixed for the departure of the whole from Nundidroog towards the capital. For the reason of this many rumours were in circulation: the Jemadar said that a sudden rupture with the English

was one; that there was only to be a muster of the cavalry was another; and after that was finished the Sultaun intended to go a-hunting into the forest bordering upon Coorg. But there was a third, which had been confirmed by news that day received from the city, that some very angry messages had passed between the Rajah of Travancore and the Sultaun, and that both had ordered musters of their forces. This the Jemadar thought the most likely of all, as he knew there had been negotiations pending between the Sultaun and the Rajah relative to some forts which had been taken possession of in a manner that did not appear warrantable by the latter.

For the present, the Khan and Kasim were the guests of the Jemadar; and having partaken of refreshment, they set out to procure a resting-place for the night, or one where they should be able to have their tents pitched.

As they went forth, many were the hearty greetings which saluted the Khan; every veteran especially, whose bronzed and furrowed face showed that the scorching heats of summer had for many a year passed over him in

constant and active employment,—and many a man, whose deeply-scarred face or breast gave a sure proof of often-tried courage,—met him with that hearty familiarity, and yet scrupulous deference, which, while it yielded nothing to the man, yet showed submission to authority and high respect for rank. All were unanimous in rejoicing that the Khan had returned, in such terms as, while it gratified Kasim to think he had become the friend and companion of one so honoured and beloved, caused him also to suspect that the Jemadar Jaffur Sahib was not much liked among them.

Nor indeed was he. Sprung from the lowest rank of the people, he possessed ferocity of character, which had early attracted the notice of the Sultaun, and he had risen rapidly to the station he held. He had also been a ready instrument in his hand to effect any cruelty he willed; and if war was to be carried into any district where Mahomedanism had not advanced, and forcible conversions of the inhabitants were to be made, or if any of the unoffending people were to be hung because they would not become converts, Jaffur Sahib was

generally selected,—as well from his address as a soldier, as from his unscrupulous character,—from among the others of the same stamp who abounded about the person of the Sultaun. He was born at Arcot, and inherited all the narrow prejudice and extreme bigotry peculiar to his townsmen, and hated all English with a malignity, in which perhaps he was only excelled through all that host by the Sultaun himself.

The presence of Kasim, in such intimate association with his commander, immediately became a source of vexation to him; and as suddenly as he had seen him, he had conceived a violent aversion to him. He saw generous courage, honesty, and faithfulness written upon the brow of the young man; and as none of these found any place in his own heart, so did he at once dislike the fancied possessor of them; for he knew the Khan's generous nature, and how easily all the authority he had by incessant intrigues possessed himself of, might be reduced in a moment by one who, after becoming acquainted with the details of the service, could not fail of observing that many abuses existed under his fostering care. The Khan had not mentioned Kasim

to him, nor could he divine in what capacity he attended upon his person, and he burned with curiosity to discover. When the Khan was gone, therefore, he addressed himself to his chief Sontaburdar, or bearer of a silver club, whose name was Madar Sahib,—a man who had followed his fortunes, and often shared whatever spoil was wrung from the unfortunate whom they could get into their power. There was something too in his retainer's face which seemed to expect the question; and at the slight turn of his master towards him, who had been musing "with the finger of deliberation placed between the teeth of vexation," he folded his hands and bent himself to listen. They were alone, for every one else had followed the Khan when he went out.

"The curses of the Sheitan upon the old fool," he said; "could not he have kept away for a day longer? I tell thee, Madar, this appearance of his is not only a thousand rupees out of my pocket, but the loss to me of all the honour, credit, and influence which a short campaign would have given. I say a curse on him."

"Ameen!" said his servant; "my lord's

star is unfortunate today; but Inshalla! it will brighten."

"And then that smooth-faced boy that he has brought with him," he continued, not heeding the other's remark;—"I'll warrant, his prime favourite. Knowest thou aught of him?"

"Nothing, Khodawund; but I can inquire."

"Do so,—see what hath brought them together. Perhaps he is the brother of this new wife he has married—the old dotard! if so, we may soon expect to get our leave to depart, Madar, for the old Khan will use his utmost influence to secure a good place near himself for his pet."

"Alla forbid! my lord has no cause to think so as yet; but I go, and will soon bring the information."

While this colloquy was going on, the Khan and Kasim had gone forward to seek for a place of temporary refuge; and after examining many parts of the broken cloisters, all of which afforded but indifferent shelter, Dilawur Ali, who had been looking about, suddenly returned.

"I have found a place, O Khan," he cried; "come and see: it is clean, and if we had any kanats*, we could make it comfortable enough for a night's lodging."

They followed him onwards to the end of the large square; and entering through a small doorway, found themselves in a square court, in the centre of which was a cistern of water, which could be approached by easy steps for the convenience of bathers. There was a deep cloister all round, supported upon carved pillars of wood, which afforded ample accommodation for the Khan's party. It was the upper part of the outside, however, which attracted their attention and admiration; and indeed the exquisite design and ornaments of the screen would merit a description at our hands, if anything so intricate could be described so as to give any idea of the building; but it consisted of a regular number of highly ornamented niches in the most florid Hindoo style, each niche containing some many-armed image of Hindoo veneration, male or female, in grotesque attitudes. The whole was of pure white

* Tent-walls.

stucco, and contrasted brightly with the dark green of some noble tamarind-trees which nodded over it, their light feathery sprays mingling with the innumerable angles and pinnacles of the architecture. Above these rose the tall summits of the temples, and again the naked grey mass of the huge granite rock frowned over all, appearing to overhang the scene.

"Ay, this will do right well," cried the Khan; "we have not been in such comfortable quarters for many days. The camels will soon be here, and then a place can be screened off and made private. Often as I have been at the fort, I never discovered this quiet spot before: truly the kafir who built it had wisdom; and for once, (may the Prophet pardon me!) I honour one of the accursed race. What sayest thou, Kasim?"

"I doubt not that forgiveness will be easily granted for an offence so slight, Khan Sahib. I confess that I for one have many friends among the unbelievers; and, though I hate their idolatry, yet I cannot help loving their gentle dispositions, and admiring their genius,

which after all is the gift of Alla to them as much as to us."

"You must not give vent to such opinions as those, Kasim," replied the Khan; "must he, Dilawur Ali? for at the city there is nought breathed but destruction of the infidels of all denominations; and if thou wouldst not make enemies, thou must chime in with the prevailing humour, or keep thy thoughts to thyself."

"Good advice, noble Khan," said Dilawur Ali; "there are quick ears enough to hear, and ready tongues enough to convey to the Sultaun (may his prosperity increase!) whatever malice or spite may dictate to bad hearts; and we need not go very far from this place to find many. Thou must pardon this freedom of speech," he continued to the young man; "but I am an old soldier, and the Khan Sahib can tell you that I have fought beside him, and I have often known a young man ruined by indiscretions of which he was not aware."

"I thank you much for your speech," said Kasim, "and desire your friendship. Inshalla! we shall know each other well ere long."

"Inshalla!" replied the other; "when the Khan Sahib is settled here for the night safely, if you will come to my tent, I will give you such information regarding this our service,—for I presume you have joined it,—as may be of use to you hereafter."

"Ay, go to him, Kasim," said the Khan; "Dilawur Ali is a Syud, a worthy man, and religious too,—in all respects fit for thy company. From him thou wilt learn many things which I could not tell thee, and which will not be lost upon thee."

As they spoke, the palankeen of the Khan was seen approaching,—the bearers with some difficulty threading their way through the crowd. Kasim ran to meet it, and conduct it to the spot where the Khan was; and for the first time for many days, nay since the attack upon the village, he caught a glimpse of the fair inmate; for the doors were slightly open as it approached; and though, as a good Mussulman ought to do, he would have turned away his head from any other, yet he could not resist the opportunity of looking through the crevice; and he thought that, if perchance her

eye should rest on his, a moment's glance would satisfy him, and would assure him that he was not forgotten.

The bearers were about to make a wrong turn as they came up, and Kasim called loudly to them. Ameena heard his voice; and the temptation to steal a passing glance at him (who we must own had been more in her thoughts than her lord might have liked could he have seen them,) caused her to withdraw from her face the end of her garment with which she had covered it for an instant, that she might see the better; she would not have done so perhaps, could she have guessed that he was looking for her. But as it happened, some obstruction in the way of the bearers obliged them to stop so close to him, that the palankeen brushed his person, and they could have spoken—so near were they. Their eyes met once more; his in admiration which he could not conceal, hers in confusion which impelled her instantly to cover her face, but not before she had seen that the scarf she had given him to bind up his wound still occupied a prominent place upon his breast. "He has

not thrown it away," she said to herself. She little knew how he valued it.

Her palankeen was carried on through the door into the place we have described. The others had departed, and she was alone with her lord, who, bidding her his usual hearty and kind welcome, opened the doors wide, and displayed to her the view which had surprised and delighted the others previously; and she broke out into a burst of girlish admiration at a sight she so little expected when her palankeen entered the gloomy doorway.

CHAPTER XIII.

Madar waited for awhile, until he saw that the Khan's servants had arrived; when, taking his silver stick of office with him, he sought their little separate encampment, which, busy as it had seemed elsewhere, was now swallowed up in the mass that occupied the space around them. He lurked about the busy and tired men for some time, not hazarding a remark to any one, lest he should meet with a sharp repulse, which indeed was to be expected; seeing that after a long march, men who must provide and cook their dinners, have much more to do than to hold conversations with prying inquirers.

At last, seeing Daood, the Khan's attendant, busy preparing his master's hooka, he advanced

towards him, and seated himself upon his hams close to him.

"Salaam Aliekoom, brother!" said he.

"Salaam!" was the only reply Daood chose to give.

"Mashalla! the Khan has returned in good health."

"Shookr Khoda! he has."

"Inshalla! he will long continue so."

"Inshalla!"

"And so he has married a young wife! Well, the Khan is a powerful man,—a youth, yet."

"Inshalla, brother!" and Daood continued his employment most assiduously, humming a popular tune.

"The brother of the Khanum is a fine-looking youth—may his prosperity increase!"

Daood looked at the speaker with no amicable eyes. "Who, in the name of the Sheitan, art thou, oh unlucky man? How darest thou, even in thy speech, to allude to the Khanum, and what mean these questions? Go! stay not here, or it may be that some of our folks may lay a stick over thee; and haply myself, if

thou stayest much longer. Go, I tell thee; or thou mayst chance to eat dirt."

Madar saw plainly enough there was little to be gained by conversation with Daood, so he left him; and after awhile tried a groom who was busy with one of the Khan's horses.

With him he was more successful, and soon he learned the history of the young man and the events which had occurred during their march from Hyderabad. Stored with these, he was preparing to depart, when he was roughly accosted by Kasim and Dilawur Ali, who had observed him in conversation with the groom; for Dilawur Ali well knew the character of the man to be of the worst kind, and that the inquiries he was making were to gratify the curiosity of his master, or perhaps to serve worse purposes.

Dilawur Ali was an officer who commanded a Duffa or division of the corps, and a man of some authority; so he cared little, now that his commander had arrived, either for the man or his master. For he was secure in the Khan's favour, and well knew that the Jemadar dared

not complain to him, even should his servant receive ill usage, or at any rate hard words. So he cried out lustily, "Ho! Madar Sahib, what seekest thou among the newly-arrived servants of the Khan? By the soul of the Prophet, thine appearance is like a bird of ill-omen,—like the first vulture to a dying sheep. What has he been asking of thee?" he said to the groom; "speak, and fear not."

"May I be your sacrifice," replied the man; "he did but ask about the Patél Sahib yonder," for so Kasim continued to be called among them.

"And what wouldst thou know about me, O base-born!" cried Kasim; "what am I to thee or to thy master?"

"Nothing, nothing, noble sir; only my master (may his prosperity increase!) bid me ask, in order that he might know something of one whose appearance is so like that of a youth brave in war; and he saw too that your worship had been wounded, and naturally wished to know whether the Khan Sahib (may his name be exalted!) had been in any danger on the way down, which may Alla avert!"

"Thy words are smooth for once," said Dilawur Ali, "and well calculated to disarm suspicion; but I know thee well, Madar Sahib, and thy master too, and I warn thee of both, Kasim. In the present case there may be no harm meant, and perhaps it is unjust to accuse or to suspect thee; but thou hadst as well take the hint, for Inshalla! we are neither fathers of owls or jackasses, and can see and hear as far as other people: dost thou understand?"

"I will tell thee more plainly, Madar Sahib," said the young Patél,—whose blood was fired by the thought that any one should be so soon prying into his affairs in the camp—"that if ever I catch thee about this encampment of ours, or tampering with any of my lord the Khan's servants, I will break every bone in thy skin: dost thou hear?"

"My lord!" began the fellow.

"Nay, no more," continued Kasim, "or I may be tempted to give way to wrath; begone, in the name of the devils on whose errand thou camest. I like thee not, by Alla! thy face is like an executioner's,—a fellow who would give

a brave man a cup of poison, or stab him from behind with a knife, and boast he had done some valiant deed."

Some others who were standing by caught the words of the young man, and laughed loudly at the truth which he had so unwittingly told; and their taunts, added to the previous ones he had been obliged to hear, caused Madar to slink off as fast as possible, followed by the jeers and abuse of those who had joined in the laugh against him.

"He is off like a maimed cur!" cried one. "You have eaten dirt!" cried another: "Alla give thee a good digestion of it, and appetite for more the next time thou comest!"

"Let us seize him and cut off his beard and mustachios!—such an impotent coward and prying rascal is not worthy to wear the emblems of manhood—let him be shaven like an eunuch!" cried a masculine virago, the wife of a camel-driver, setting her arms a-kimbo, who thought it a fair opportunity to join in. "Return, O Madar Sahib, that I may spit on thy beard!"

Madar did not apparently choose to accept this polite invitation, for he thought it possible

that the first threat might be attempted, and the shout of laughter which followed the latter part of the speech caused him to quicken his pace considerably; and only once looking behind him, to throw a glance of hate towards those by whom he had been menaced, he pursued his way, and was soon lost in the crowd.

"There goes a spiteful heart," said Kasim; "didst thou see the look he cast behind him?"

"Ay, brother," replied Dilawur Ali; "thou hast said truly, he has a spiteful heart, and I could tell thee many a tale of his iniquity; but I am half sorry that we did not speak him fair."

"I am not: I would rather have an open enemy than one under the garb of civility or friendship."

"The scoundrel will tell all he has heard, and as much more as he can invent, to the Jemadar yonder."

"And what of that?" said Kasim; "what have I to fear?"

"This is no place to speak of him," said his friend; "come to my tent, I will tell thee much of him."

And truly the account the worthy Syud gave of the Jemadar was not calculated in any way to allay fear, if any had existed in Kasim's heart; for it was one of deceit, of villany often successful, of constant intrigue, and of cruel revenge; but the young man's fearless spirit only made light of these, which might have disquieted a more experienced person; and he asked gaily, "But what makest thee think that he bears me any enmity? we have as yet hardly seen each other."

"I know it from his vile face, Kasim. While the Khan often spoke to thee kindly in his presence, his eyes wandered to thee with a bad expression, and they no sooner left thee than he and that Sontaburdar of his exchanged furtive glances. I was watching them,—for I saw at once he would be jealous of thee."

"He may do his worst," said Kasim, "I care not." But in spite of this expression his heart was not quite so free of care about what had happened as it had been before he had heard Dilawur Ali's stories.

Madar returned, burning with spiteful and revengeful feelings, and with much excitement

visible in his countenance, he rushed into his master's presence and flung his turban on the ground, while he gnashed his teeth in rage.

"What news hast thou, Madar? What has been done to thee? speak, good man. What has happened?"

"Judge if I have not cause to be revenged, Khodawund: I am less than a dog; and may my grave be unblessed if I do not avenge the insults I have suffered both for myself and you, O my lord!"

"Why, what has happened?"

"I tell you, you have been reviled by that son of perdition Dilawur Ali, and the boy whom that old fool the Khan has brought with him. Hear, Jemadar Sahib, what they said;—they said they would—Inshalla!" and Madar twisted up his mustachios fiercely as he spoke,—"defile your beard, and throw dirt on it,—they called you a coward and less than man. They said they did not value you a broken couree; and they threatened to beat me, to break every bone in my skin; and set up a vile woman, one without shame, with an uncovered face, to abuse me in vile terms, to call me an eunuch, and to

threaten to shave my beard and mustachios; and this before a thousand others, loochas and shodas* like themselves. But I will be revenged. Ya Alla! ya Hoosein! ya Hyder!" he cried, as he took up his turban which he had thrown down in his passion, and began to tie it awry upon his head. "I will be revenged!"

"They said this?—Ah, Kumbukht!"—cried the Jemadar, who had heard out his servant's tale with some difficulty,—"they said it,—and thou hadst ears to hear it? Alla! Alla! am I a sheep or a cow to bear this?—I who am, Inshalla! a tiger, an eater of men's hearts,—before whom men's livers turn to water,—that I should be obliged to devour such abomination! What ho! Furashes! any one without there! go, bring Dilawur Ali, Duffadar, and—But no," he said mentally, checking the torrent of passion; "it cannot be so. I have no authority now to punish, and they would defy me; the Khan would take fire in a moment if he heard I had been inquiring into the station of this proud youth,—whom, Inshalla! I will yet humble."

* Dissolute vagabonds.

"Go," he continued to the servants, who had suddenly entered the tent; "when I want you I will call again; at present I would be alone with Madar.

"And so thou heardest all this abuse of me, and ate dirt thyself, and had not the heart to say a word or strike a blow in return! I could spit on thee, coward!"

"May I be your sacrifice, Khodawund, I was helpless; what could I have done in that crowd? had I only returned a word, the woman whom they set up would have poured filthy abuse on me."

"They shall rue the day that they uttered the words thou hast repeated; Madar, they shall wish their tongues had never said them, and that their hearts had eaten them, ere they had birth: Ul-humd-ul-illa! I have yet power, and can crush that butterfly, whose gay bearing is only for a season,—but not yet—not yet.

"And who is this proud fool?" he continued after a pause to Madar, who had been drinking in every word of his master's soliloquy with greedy ears, and rejoicing in the hope of speedy revenge. "Who saidst thou he is?"

"A Patél, noble sir,—a miserable Patél of a village, Alla knows where,—a man whose mother, Inshalla! is vile."

"I care not for his mother,—who is he? and how comes he with the Khan? tell me, or I will beat thee with my shoe."

"My lord,—Khodawund!—be not angry, but listen: he is the Patél of a village where the Khan and his young wife were nearly drowned; he saved the lady, and he fought afterwards against some Mahrattas when they attacked the village where the Khan was resting for the night, and was wounded in his defence."

"And this is all, Madar?"

"It is, protector of the poor! it is all; they say the Patél is a Roostum,—a hero,—a man who killed fourteen Mahrattas with his own hand, who—"

"Bah!" cried Jaffur impatiently, "and thou art a fool to believe them;" and he fell to musing. "He must have seen her face," he said at length aloud.

"He must," echoed his attendant; "they say he carried her in his arms from the river."

"Khoob! and what said they of her beauty?"

"That she is as fair as the full moon in the night of Shub-i-Barāt."

"Khoob! and he has seen her again, I doubt not, since then."

"Willa alum!" said Madar, raising his thumbs to his ears. "How should your slave know? but it is likely,—people cannot conceal their faces when they are travelling."

"No, nor, Inshalla! wish to do so; but we shall see,—take care that you mention not abroad what occurred this evening,—they will forget it."

"But my lord will not!"

"I never forget an insult till I have had its exchange, and that thou well knowest, Madar. Begone! make it known without that I may now be visited. We will consider of this matter."

But we must return to the Khan, whose active furashes had encircled several of the pillars of the cloisters with high tent-walls, swept out the inclosures thus made, spread the carpets, and converted what was before open arches and naked walls and floors into a comfortable apartment, perfectly secure from observation. Ameena

took possession of it and was soon joined by her lord, who in truth was in nowise sorry after the fatigues of the day to enjoy first a good dinner, and afterwards the luxury of a soft cotton mattress, and to have his limbs gently kneaded by the tiny hands of his fair wife, while she amused him with a fairy-tale, or one of those stories of intrigue and love which are so common among the Easterns.

The cool air of the Mysore country had apparently invigorated her, and the languor which the heat and the fatigue of constant travelling had caused in the Carnatic had entirely disappeared, and given place to her usual lively and joyous expression. She had thrown a deep orange-coloured shawl, with a very richly-worked border, around her to protect her from the night breeze, that blew chilly over the tent-walls, which did not reach to the roof of the building they were in, and it fell in heavy folds around her, appearing to make her light figure almost more slender from the contrast. She was inexpressively lovely, as she now bent playfully over the Khan, employed in her novel vocation, and again desisting began afresh some other

story wherewith to beguile the time till the hour of repose arrived.

"Alla bless thee, Ameena!" said the Khan, after one of her lively sallies, when her face had brightened, and her eyes sparkled at some point of her tale—"Alla bless thee! thou art truly lovely to night: the Prophet (may his name be honoured!) could have seen no brighter Houris in Paradise (when the will of Alla called him there) than thou art."

"I am my lord's slave," said the lady, "and to please him is my sole endeavour day and night. Happy is my heart when it tells me I have succeeded,—how much more when I am honoured with such a remark from thine own lips, O my lord! And as to my beauty,"—and here she threw a glance into the little mirror she wore upon her thumb,—"my lord surely flatters me; he must have seen far fairer faces than mine."

"Never, never, by the Prophet!" cried the Khan, with energy; "never, I swear by thine own eyes, never. I have but one regret, Ameena, and that cannot be mended or altered now."

Ameena's heart suddenly failed her, for Ka-

sim came to her remembrance, and she thought for an instant that he might suspect.

"Regret! what dost thou regret?" she asked hesitatingly. "Anything that thy poor slave hath done? anything—"

"Nothing, fairest, on thy part; it was for myself."

Her heart was suddenly relieved of a load,—"For thyself?" she said gaily; "what dost thou regret, Khan Sahib?"

"That I am not twenty years younger, for thy sake, Ameena," he said with much feeling. "Methinks now, to see these grey hairs and this grey beard," and he touched them as he spoke, "so near thy soft and waving tresses, I seem more like a father to thee than a husband: and yet thou art mine, Ameena. I would thou wert older, fair one!"

"And if I were, I should not be so fair," she said artlessly.

"I care not, so that we had grown old together; at least I should have seen thy beauty, and the remembrance of it would have been with me."

Ameena sighed; her thoughts wandered to

Kasim's noble figure and youthful yet expressive countenance; in spite of herself and almost unconsciously she drew her hand across her eyes, as if to shut something ideal from her sight.

The Khan heard her sigh; he would rather not have heard it, though his own remark he knew had provoked it. "I have said the truth, Ameena, and thou wouldst rather I were a younger man," he said, looking at her intently. "But what matter? these idle words do but pain thee. It is our destiny, sweet one, and we must work it out together."

"Ay, it is our destiny," she said.

"The will of Alla!" continued the Khan, looking up devoutly, "which hath joined two beings together so unsuited in age, but not in temper I think, Ameena. Thou art not as others, wilful and perverse,—heavy burdens—hard to carry—and from which there is no deliverance; but a sweet and lovely flower which a monarch might wear in his heart and be proud of. So thou truly art to Rhyman Khan, and ever wilt be, even though enemies should come between us."

"Enemies! my lord," she said with surprise

in her tone; "I never had an enemy, even in my own home: and I am here with thee in a strange land, where I know no one who could be mine enemy?"

"May Alla put them far from thee, fairest!" he replied affectionately; "and yet sometimes I fear that thou mayest have to encounter enmity."

"I have heard it said by my honoured father, Khan, that as the blessed Prophet had many enemies, and as the martyrs Hassan and Hoosein came to their sad deaths by them, it is the lot of all to have some one inimical; but he meant men, whose occupations and cares call them into the world,—not women, like me, who, knowing no one but my servants, cannot make enemies of them if I am kind."

"But I mean those who would be jealous of thy beauty, and seek thus to injure thee,—from these I alone fear," replied her husband.

"I fear not, Khan," she said, simply and confidently, "neither for thee nor myself. I cannot think that thou couldst ever give thy Ameena cause for jealousy, or any one else cause of jealousy of her. Alla help me! I should die if such could be—"

"Nay, there thou shalt be safe," he said, interrupting her; "for never, never shalt thou have cause to say of Rhyman Khan that he was false to thee. I am a soldier, and one whose honour has known neither stain nor spot; and yet—"

He had stopped suddenly and appeared to think; and, while he thought, suddenly an idea flashed into her mind,—could she have already a rival? She could not bear it to rest there for an instant, ere she threw it off in words.

"Speak, O Khan!" she cried, "thou hast none but me who claims thy love? thou hast not belied thyself to one who has here none to protect her?—no father,—no mother,—none but thee! Oh, my lord!—*thou* canst not have deceived the child who trusted thee and never asked of thee aught?" She was very excited.

"I have not deceived thee, Ameena; but I have not told thee all my history,—I have not told thee as yet what sooner or later thou must know. I have not told thee how that for years I pined for the love of woman, such pure child-like love as thine, and found nought after a short intercourse but bitter words and a constant seeking after wealth which I had not to

bestow,—how I have had to bear constant upbraiding from those out of whose families I chose them, because I would not spend my substance upon wasteful parents,—upon sons whose very existence was a disgrace to them. Hadst thou known this, Ameena, thou wouldst not marvel that I sought one like thee in a distant land,—one who, removed from every tie, and with no one to sow dissension between us, should learn to love and trust Rhyman Khan as, Inshalla! he ought to be loved and trusted."

She knew not how to reply; on the one hand the concealment of other ties which the Khan had kept secret so long and now revealed so unexpectedly, and the undefined dread of the hate of rivals, smote her to the very heart; on the other, her attention was powerfully arrested by the bold truthfulness of his disclosure; she was affected by the picture of desolation he had drawn of his own state, and his disappointments, and she was soothed to think that all he had sought for years was centred in her. She was silent,—she could not speak under such conflicting thoughts.

"Thou hast not told me all," she said at

length; "thou hast not said how many—" she could not finish the sentence.

"There are two, dearest Ameena,—two, on each of whom I fixed hopes which have been broken in many ways. I have never had a child to bless me; and where love should have been, and mildness like thine to compensate for such a disappointment, rancour has come and ill temper, and with them despair to me, —hopelessness of that quiet peace which my mind seeks when war and its perils and excitements are past. When disappointment came with the first, I thought a second might perchance be more to me than she had been: alas! I soon was undeceived, and bitterly too, Ameena. But after all, who can say there are no flowers to be pulled in the rugged pathways of their lives? had this not happened, I should never have known thee, my rose,—never have seen that look of pity which thy beauteous eyes wear now! It is from these I fear thou wilt have to bear some jealousies, some enmity; and canst thou brave somewhat for the love of Rhyman Khan? Continue to be to me as thou art now, and my wealth, my power, nay my life-

blood itself, are thine, as freely as thou carest to use them. Now thou knowest all, and a heavy weight is gone from my heart, which had long abode there. Speak,—art thou content?"

"I would I had known this earlier," she said sadly, after awhile; "but as it is, I am thankful to hear it even now. My lord knows well that I am but a child, and no match for the intrigues of those who are more versed in the world's wisdom. I feel that it has saddened and sobered me; and where I had hoped in my bright fancy to roam as I listed in the garden of thy love, unchecked and unheeded by any one but thyself, I must cover myself with the veil of discretion and deliberation, and take heed to my steps lest I fall into the snares which jealousy will not fail to place for me."

"Alla forbid!" cried the Khan fervently; "thou hast no cause to fear them."

"I know not," she replied; "but I can scarcely hope that there may be friendship between me and those whom you describe; there may be a show for awhile, but the end will be bitterness."

And the poor girl wept; for she had suddenly been disturbed upon her height of security, or at all events of unmolested occupation, and even in a few minutes she could not help expecting some rude collision which would perhaps cast her down headlong. And her own peaceful home,—its freedom from care, its loving affection, its harmless pleasures,—rose so vividly to her mind, that she could not help for the time regretting bitterly that she had left it, to endure such a prospect as appeared to open before her. Nor did the Khan disturb, except by a caress or a well-timed word of cheerful hope, the thoughts which he knew must be passing in her heart, but to which he could not respond in a manner to make her forget them on the instant; they must have their vent, he thought, and thought wisely. She lay down and wept, till sleep gradually asserted its mastery over her wearied form and rudely-excited thoughts.

"She shall never come to harm, so help me Alla and his holy prophet!" said the Khan mentally, as he bent over her and gently drew some covering upon her without disturbing

her; "she shall never know harm or evil, as long as the arm or power of Rhyman Khan can shield her! She still sobs," he said, as every now and then a sob broke softly from her, like to that from a child who has cried itself to sleep, and her bosom heaved under the oppression. "I would to Alla I had not caused her this pain! and yet it was inevitable. Their jealousy and malice will be great I know, and their power is great, but, Inshalla! there will be no fear of their machinations, and I will soon teach her to despise them; they too will cease to use them when they see them of no avail and unheeded."

CHAPTER XIV.

The day after, the Khan's Risala halted at Bangalore, from whence it was ordered to escort some treasure, military stores, and many English prisoners to the capital.

The Khan having now taken the command, he was enabled to employ Kasim in many useful offices, both as a scribe and in the execution of his orders; and he was delighted to find in him one whom he could trust, and whose advice was often of use in matters that perplexed his own uninventive mind. And although he held no situation as yet in the Government service, nor was enrolled in the regiment, yet he gradually became looked up to, even during the few days he had been with it, by the subordinate officers, who naturally

wished to curry favour with one so much in association with their chief; accordingly Kasim was courted by almost all,—feasted and made much of. Some, indeed, regarded him with jealousy, at the head of whom was the person we have already named, Jaffur Sahib; and as their opinions became known to one another, they gradually formed a party, which, though its numbers were small, made up for that deficiency in bitter dislike.

The most prominent of these, besides Jaffur Sahib himself, was Naser-oo-deen, the chief accountant and secretary of the regiment,—one of those corrupt and wily scoundrels so often to be found in the persons of those who have been educated in the daily observance of schemes and fraud: for his father had filled a high situation as moonshee or secretary near the person of Hyder Ali; and it is impossible for any one to fill a similar place in any native court, without having daily opportunities of improvement in the arts of intrigue, falsehood, and corruption. He was also a constant associate of Jaffur Sahib; and in many a plan for cheating the Government by false musters of

men, and extra charges for grain and forage, they had been nearly associated,—indeed, had divided the spoil between them.

Naser-oo-deen had also been the agent for the supply of forage and other necessaries to a large number of the Khan's horses which were in the Risala; and as he seldom looked after these accounts himself, there had been a very handsome profit to be gained from them by the subordinates. It was probable that upon the first ground therefore—that is, so far as the regiment was concerned — Kasim and the Moonshee would never have come in contact with each other; but they were not long in doing so when the private interests of the Khan were in question.

For want of occupation Kasim had solicited some employment from the Khan, who had desired him to look after his own horses, and to examine the accounts the Moonshee should furnish of their expenditure; and for this office Kasim was well fitted, not only from his knowledge of writing, but from his experience as a Patél of the prices of grain and forage. The accounts had used to be daily submitted to the

Khan, and during his absence they had accumulated to a large amount. Occupied in other duties and affairs, the Khan could not afford time to hear them read, and gave them over for examination to his young friend, who, in the careful scrutiny he made of them, and his readiness in comprehending their intricate nature, convinced the Moonshee that he had to deal with a person of no ordinary exactitude and ability.

Kasim, in his inspection of the documents, had much occasion to suspect that the rates and quantities charged were far greater than the truth; but he did not dare at first to make any accusation against a man of the Moonshee's apparent probity and respectability. He had seen enough, however, to put him on his guard for the future, and there was soon ample reason to confirm his suspicions that all was not as fair as the accounts showed. While they were at Bangalore he made a daily memorandum of the prices of grain in the several bazaars, and inquiries also of the men who rode the Khan's horses in the regiment, and of the grooms also, as to the quantities used; and on

comparing them with the memorandums furnished to him by the Moonshee, the deceit was too flagrant to pass unnoticed. Accordingly he sought that worthy, and, without any accusation, ventured to point out some inaccuracies, as he supposed they must be, in the accounts, as compared with the market rates. These the Moonshee tried to support with all the effrontery he was able to muster for some time; but Kasim was steady, and in the end triumphed. It was, however, an offence which rankled deeply in the Moonshee's mind, and in an evening converse with his friend the Jemadar he alluded to the matter in no very amiable humour.

"Things have come to a pretty pass since the Khan has brought that boy with him!" said he indignantly to the Jemadar when they were alone.

"How? has he interfered with you, as he appears to wish to do with every one else?"

"To be sure he has—it seems he can read; and the old fool, without thinking about it, gave him all my accounts of the Pagha to

look over, instead of signing and passing them at once."

"And he discovered—"

"No, nothing in them, Alla be praised! so that there is a good round sum to divide between us; but he evidently suspected the rates of grain, which, believe me, Jemadar, you put too high."

"Not a whit, not a whit, since we have got the money."

"But I say it was, for it led the young prying fellow to ask the prices of grain in the bazaars, and of forage too; and, as it seems he is a Patél, he knows more about the matter than we do ourselves; so when I gave him the accounts today, he showed me a memorandum of every day's nerrikh*, and began comparing it as simply as possible with the account and showing the difference. By the Prophet! I could have struck him for his pretence of ingenuousness, and his seeming unconsciousness that he was detecting me. I tried to bully him, Jemadar Sahib, and said I had eaten the Khan's salt longer than he had, and was not

* Rate of prices.

to be suspected by a boy; but it would not do; he told me not to be angry, that he might be mistaken, and that he would show the accounts to the Khan if I liked; but this you know would not have answered my purpose, for the old fellow would have fired up in a moment."

"And what did you do? you surely did not alter them?"

"Why what else could I do, Jemadar? I at last pretended to see the mistake and make fresh accounts."

"In other words, O cowardly fool! you ate dirt; you allowed him to obtain a mastery over you which you will never regain. You call yourself a Moonshee!—a man of letters! Shame on you, I say, to allow yourself to be dictated to by a boy! Had I a beard like yours I would cut it off for very shame."

"But, Jemadar—" he interposed.

"I tell thee I can hear nothing; I know this will not end here,—the fellow's prying should have been stopped at once; and his suspicions will never rest, believe me, till he has found out the whole; and at any rate we shall lose money."

"We shall, certainly."

"How much?"

"Two hundred rupees, I dare say."

"Alla! Alla! so much! and the worst is that our trade is stopped."

"I fear so; how can it be otherwise, as he observes the rates?"

"Could you get him to take the accounts himself, Moonshee Sahib, we might find him out ourselves overcharging in a few days, and so they would fall back to us, and he would be ruined."

"Alla knows!" sighed the Moonshee; "at any rate it is worth trying; I will see to it. I am only afraid your turn will come next."

"I'll tell you what, Naser, the thought is not to be borne. What! lose my monthly gains, without which this service is nothing to me!—Inshalla! no. If there is a Kasim Ali Patél, there is at least a Shekh Jaffur Jemadar. I tell thee, man, I was not born to eat dirt at his hands, but he at mine; and if I cannot see into the depths of futurity like the Sultaun, (may his name be honoured!) yet I can see far enough to behold this boy's disgrace at my hands. Dost

thou hear—at my hands? thou shouldst know by this time that I rarely fail of my purpose."

"May Alla grant it!" said the Moonshee piously.

"I tell thee," he continued, "I hated him from the first, because I found he would stand between me and the Khan. He abused me in hearing of all the camp; those words have gone forth among the men, and as I look in their faces I fancy that the remembrance of them comes into their heart, and that they exult over me. I tell thee this is not to be borne, and I will have an exchange for it, or I will see why: dost thou understand?"

"I do."

"And thou must aid me."

"Surely,—with my pen, with my advice, my—"

"Bah! thy advice,—who asked for it? who wants that of a fool who could not defend his own papers? when I have occasion for thee in this matter I will tell thee, and see that thou doest it; and—"

"My lord is not angry with his poor servant?" said the Moonshee cringingly.

"I have good cause to be so, but must eat my vexation for the present. Go! you have your dismissal." He mused for awhile after the Moonshee had left him, and then called to Madar, who waited without.

"Have you discovered anything more about the Khan's wife, Madar?" he asked.

"Nothing, my lord, except that she is very beautiful."

"That you said before: nothing between her and the Patél?"

"Nothing, except that he had seen her."

"That too you told me: does he see her now?"

"Willa Alum*!" was the reply.

"It would be as well for us if he did."

"Shall your slave try to effect it?"

"I have been thinking of it, Madar; you might contrive something. I tell thee I hate that boy more and more; it is only this moment that I have heard from Naser-oo-deen Moonshee that his accounts have been suspected by him."

"Does the Khan know of it?"

* God knows!

"No, not as yet; but there is no security for us, and there is no saying what may happen, for this boy holds a sword over us."

"I understand,—my lord will trust me; and depend on it that, sooner or later, I find a way of helping him to revenge these insults."

It was thus to screen their own iniquity, of which they were conscious, that these schemes were being undertaken against the peace of two individuals who had never harmed any of the plotters; and in the course of our history we shall follow them to their conclusions.

The consciousness of his own evil practices and corruption, as regarded the public service, made the Jemadar jealous of any one who should usurp the place he had held with the Khan; not because the Khan liked him, but because, being indolent by nature, and unacquainted with the details of the private economy of his Risalas, the Khan was glad enough to find that any one would undertake that for him, which he could not bring his mind to take any interest in, or indeed to understand. And if Kasim had succeeded in detecting the Moonshee, what might not *he* have to fear, whose

peculations were even of a more daring nature, and extended to the men, the horses, and the establishment of the corps! The Jemadar brooded over these thoughts incessantly; and his avaricious and miserly spirit could as ill brook the idea of pecuniary loss, as his proud and revengeful heart the prospect of disgrace, and the insult he had been told by his emissary that he had already received.

After a few days' halt at Bangalore, for the purpose of preparing carriages for the removal of the English prisoners to the capital, and the collection of some of the revenue of the district, which was also to be escorted thither, the morning arrived on which they were to set out, and each corps was drawn up in front of the Mysore gate of the fortress; while the Khan, attended by Kasim and some others, rode into it in order to receive the prisoners, and the Khan his last orders from the Governor.

While he was employed in his audience, Kasim rode hither and thither, observing with delight the impregnable strength of the fortress,—the cannon, the arms and appearance of the disciplined garrison, and the few

French soldiers and officers who were lounging about. He had never before seen a European; and their appearance, their tight-fitting and ungraceful dress, inspired him with no very exalted idea of their prowess.

"Can these be the men," he thought, "to whom the Sultaun trusts, instead of to the brave hearts and sturdy arms of the men of Islam! but so I am told, and I am to see more at the capital. Well, it is strange that they should have the talents for such contrivances in war, as never enter into our hearts: our only defence is a strong arm and a good sword and shield; and if we had not to fight against the English kafirs, we should not require these French, who after all are only infidels too. But here come the prisoners I suppose," he added, as a few soldiers, horse and foot, with drawn swords, advanced from behind an adjacent wall; "the brave kafirs, as all call them, and hate them because they are so brave; I confess I do not, and only because they are the Sultaun's enemies, and infidels into the bargain."

His curiosity was raised to the highest pitch to see these unhappy men, who, in defiance of

the treaty of 1784, were kept in the fortresses of the country without a hope of deliverance, and cut off from any chance of communication with their countrymen on the coast. Among the few with whom Kasim had associated, "the English" were the continued subject of conversation; their religion, their manners, and their persons were ridiculed and held up to scorn by all, but their bravery none could deny; and that man held himself far exalted above his fellows, who had entered into personal combat with or slain one of them. Many were the tales then in circulation,—some exaggerations of reality, others stern scenes of hard fighting,—which even figurative language failed to exalt above their due estimation.

In company with the Khan, with Dilawur Ali and with others, Kasim had heard many of these relations; and indeed, whenever he listened in the camp, either to itinerant story-tellers, or to those gathered around a watch-fire, the English were alike the theme of execration for their religion and their falsehood, or on rare occasions praised for their devoted bravery. No wonder then was it that he

watched for their coming with very eager anxiety: figuring to himself what they might be, he thought to have seen them a martial-looking people, and that in their persons he should realise his own ideas of what a warrior ought to be,—tall and finely formed, haughty in appearance, with an eye of fire and an arm of iron.

One by one the prisoners came before him, some of them heavily chained, others free; but all men on whose faces the rigour of captivity had set its seal. Melancholy and pale, many of them wasted by sickness, and by mental and bodily sufferings, they were shadows of what they had been; their clothes hung in rags about them, and, though not dirty, they were of a colour which proved that they themselves had washed them from time to time; a few of them had worn-out uniform coats upon them, whose stained and discoloured appearance fitted well with the wretched condition of their wearers. Their step was slow and weak, and those who wore fetters with difficulty moved at all; none of them spoke, but many of them gazed around upon the walls,

and looked up into the bright heavens, and smiled, as though they were glad that motion and air were once more allowed to refresh their cramped and emaciated limbs and weary spirits.

In spite of his previous determination to hate them with the same spirit as that of his companions, Kasim felt he could not; there would, in spite of his efforts to repress it, arise a feeling of pity, that men whom he doubted not were as brave as the race was represented to be, should exhibit so sorrowful an appearance,—one which told a forcible tale of unalleviated misery. Following those on foot were several in small doolies, whose emaciated and ghastly looks told of their sickness and unfitness for removal.

He had expected a feeling of triumph to arise in his heart as he should behold the infidel English captives; but there was something so touching in the appearance of the melancholy procession, that he felt none; he could much rather have wept as he looked on it, than joined in any expression of ill-will towards the prisoners.

As they advanced, a few boys who were near hooted the captives, and abused them in obscene language. This they did not appear to deign to notice; at last one boy, more bold than the rest, took up a stone, and accompanying it with a savage oath, flung it against the prisoner nearest to him, and, having struck him, was greeted with a loud shout of joy by his companions.

Almost ere he was aware of his own intention, and impelled by the wanton insult upon one so helpless, Kasim violently urged his horse across the open space up to the boy,—who, having been successful in his first fling, had picked up another stone with a similar intention,—and struck him severely several times with the whip he had in his hand. Screaming with pain, the boy ran off to a distance; and his associates, terrified at the punishment their companion had received, dispersed at once.

Kasim could not resist speaking to the prisoner on whose behalf he had acted; and riding up to him, he hoped, not knowing whether he should be understood, that he was not hurt,

adding, that he had punished the young miscreant who had thrown the stone.

The voice was one of kindness, and it was long since one like it had sounded in the young Englishman's ears.

"I am not hurt," he said, in good Hindostanee; "and if I had been, an act of kindness such as yours would have amply repaid me for receiving it. Gallant soldier! you, it would seem, have not been taught as your countrymen to hate the English. Do not, however, speak to me: an act of courtesy to one of us may chance to bring disgrace upon you, and I would not have you receive that return for your kindness. May God protect you!"

They passed on, and Kasim remained in the same spot, gazing after him; his tall figure and proud air, his pale but handsome face and deeply-expressive blue eyes,—such as Kasim had never seen before,—his fluent speech and manly tone,—above all, his last words, "May God protect you!" affected him powerfully.

"God protect you!" he repeated; "he believes then in Alla; how can he be an infidel? He said, 'Alla Hafiz!' and he spoke like a Mussulman; why should he be hated? I will see

him again. By Alla! such a man is worth knowing, and I may be able to befriend him; surely he is a man of rank."

But here his surmises were put an end to by Dilawur Ali, who, riding up to him, bade him accompany him, for the Khan was ready to proceed.

"Then you saw the kafirs,—may their end be perdition!" said the rough soldier.

"I did, brother," returned Kasim; "miserable enough they look, and as if they could hardly move; how are they to travel?"

"There are covered carts for some, Meer Sahib, for they cannot bear the sun,—doolies for others who are weak; and one or two, who are officers I hear, are to be allowed an elephant,—but we shall see." And they rode rapidly through the gate of the fort.

"I thought he was an officer," exclaimed Kasim; "I thought he was more than one of the lower rank;" as the Englishman with whom he had spoken was desired to mount an elephant which bore a handsome umbara*.

"Why? what know you of him?"

* A kind of howdah.

"Nothing; but I spoke a few words to him, and it struck me that he was a man of breeding and rank."

"You had better beware, Kasim," said his companion; "acts may be misinterpreted, and men like you never want enemies to assist others in thinking ill of them."

"Thank you for your advice," said Kasim; "but I have done or said nothing that I am ashamed of." Kasim afterwards mentioned what he had done to the Khan, who could not help praising the young soldier's action.

"By the Prophet, well done!" he cried, as Kasim related the incident; "I am glad the young Haram-zada was soundly whipped; he will know how to throw stones another time. I have fought against the Feringhees, and hate them; and yet, in such a case, I think I should have acted as thou didst, Kasim. Hast thou spoken to the Feringhee since?"

"No: Dilawur Ali seemed to think I had done wrong even in addressing him at all; but I should like much to speak with him; they say he is a Sirdar of rank."

"I hear he has accepted the Sultaun's offer of

pardon, and that he will serve in the army; so at least the Governor of the fort hoped, but we shall see. I doubt it, for the Feringhees are very obstinate, and Tippoo has gained over none as yet by fair means."

"Then there are some in the army?"

"A few only who have been honoured with the rite of Islam; but they are of the lowest grade, and he does not trust them. Go you then, when we have pitched the camp, and ask this Feringhee whether he will serve with us under the banner of the lion of the Faith."

CHAPTER XV.

Kasim hardly need be desired to do this; he longed to have some amicable conversation with one who had already excited such interest in his heart, and, as soon as possible after his few duties were discharged, he went to the tents which had been pitched for the English, and sought out his acquaintance. They met with pleasure; on Kasim's part, with the result of the interest he had felt,—on the other's, with joy that among so many enemies there was one from whom he had received kindness, and who now again sought him.

"I little thought to have seen you again," said the officer (for so in truth he was), "and this visit is a proof to me that we are not enemies."

"No, certainly," said Kasim; "I have no enmity towards you."

"Perhaps then you can inform me and my poor comrades why we are being removed to the capital; to us it is inexplicable."

"You are to enter the service of the Sultaun, we hear," replied Kasim; and from the flush of indignation which rose in the other's pallid face, he could see how that idea was spurned by him.

"Never!" he cried, "never! and the Sultaun knows this full well; months, nay years ago, he offered the alternative between this and death, and we spurned it with contempt. He will try us again, and receive the same answer; and then perhaps he may relieve us by death from this imprisonment, which is worse."

"Then it has been severe?"

"What! are you in the Sultaun's service, and know not of our condition?"

"I am not in his service," said Kasim; "chance threw me into the society of the officer with whom I travel to the city. I may enter it there, which my friend wishes me to do, if it can be effected advantageously."

"Do not enter it, I beseech you," cried the

Englishman with sudden enthusiasm; "with so tender and gallant a heart, thou couldst not serve one who is a tiger in nature, one whose glory it is to be savage and merciless as his namesake. Rather fly from hence; bear these letters from me to Madras,—they will ensure thee reward—service—anything thou choosest to ask; take them, and the blessing of Heaven go with thee! thou wilt have succoured the unfortunate, and given news of their existence to many who have long ago mourned us as dead."

"Feringhee!" said Kasim earnestly, "thy gallant bearing has won my regard, and my friendly feeling will ever be towards thee; but I abhor thy race, and long for the time when I shall strike a blow against them in fair and open field. I enter the service of the Sultaun at the city, whither we go; and this is answer enough to thy request; ask me not, therefore, to do what I should be ashamed of a week hence. I will speak to my commander about thy letters, and doubt not they will be forwarded."

"The only gleam of hope which has broken

on me for years has again faded from my sight," said the young officer with deep melancholy. "I well know that no letters will be forwarded from me. If thy master, or he who will be so, has denied my existence, and broken his solemn treaties in my detention, and that of the other poor fellows who are with me, thinkest thou he will allow me to write word that I am here?"

"And is it so?" said Kasim; "I believe thee; thine enemies even say that the English never lie. If it be possible to forward thy letters, I will do it, and ask thee for them; and now farewell! If Kasim Ali Patél can ever help thee, ask for him when thou art in trouble or danger; if he is near thee, he will do his utmost in thy behalf;" so saying, Kasim left him, and returned to the Khan.

"I thought it would be as thou hast related," said he to Kasim, as the latter detailed the conversation; "such a man is neither to be bribed nor threatened. Even their bitterest enemies must say of these unbelievers that they are faithful to death. May Alla help him! for I fear the Sultaun's displeasure at this,

his last rejection of rank and service, may be fatal to him and to the rest; men's determinations, however, do not hold out always with the fear of death before their eyes,—but we shall see. Whatever is written in his destiny he must accomplish."

"Ameen!" said Kasim: "I pray it may be favourable, for I honour him though he is a kafir."

On the fifth day afterwards they approached the city; Kasim, with delight that his journey was ended, and that he should enter on his service without delay,—the Khan, with mingled feelings of joy at returning to his master and his old companions in arms, and of vexation at the thoughts of his two wives, and the reception Ameena was sure to meet with from them. This, in truth, was a source of the most lively uneasiness to him, for he could not but see that, say what he would to comfort her, the spirit of Ameena had considerably drooped since the night at Nundidroog, when he told her of their existence. Still he hoped the best; and he said to himself, "If they cannot agree, I shall only have to get a separate house, and live away from them."

"Behold the city!" cried many an one of those who led the force, as, on reaching the brow of a slight eminence, the broad valley of the river Cavery burst upon them; in the centre of which, though still some miles distant, appeared Seringapatam, amidst groves of trees, and surrounded by richly-cultivated lands, watered by the river. Not much of the fort, or the buildings within it, could be seen; but the tall minarets of a large mosque, two enormous Hindoo pagodas and some other smaller ones, and the white-terraced roofs of the palaces, appeared above the trees; and as they approached nearer, the walls and defences of the fort could be distinguished from the ground upon which it was built.

Passing several redoubts which commanded the road, they reached the river, and fording its uneven and rocky channel with some difficulty, they continued on towards the fort itself, whose long lines of rampart, high walls, bastions, and cavaliers, from which cannon peeped in every direction, filled Kasim with astonishment and delight.

As they rode onwards through the bazaar of

the outer town, they saw at the end of the street a cavalcade approaching, evidently that of a person of rank. A number of spearmen preceded it, running very fast, and shouting the titles of a person who was advancing at a canter, followed by a brilliant group, clad in gorgeous apparel, cloth-of-gold, and the finest muslins, and many in chain-armour, which glittered brightly in the sun.

Ere Kasim could ask who it was, the cortége was near the head of his corps, which drew off to one side to allow it to pass. As the company advanced, the Khan dashed his heels into the flanks of his charger, and flew to meet it: Kasim saw him halt suddenly, and present the hilt of his sword to one who, from his appearance and the humility of the Khan's attitude, he felt assured could be no other than the Sultaun.

Just then one of those bulls which the belief of the Hindoos teaches them are incarnations of divinity, and which roam at large in every bazaar, happened to cross the road lazily before the royal party. The attendant spearmen strove to drive it on; but not accustomed to being interfered with so rudely, it resisted their

shouts and blows with the butt-end of their spears, and menaced them with its horns. There ensued some little noise, and Kasim, who was watching the Sultaun, saw him observe it.

"A spear, a spear!" he heard him cry; and as one of the attendants handed him one, he exclaimed to his suite, "Now, friends, for a hunt! Yonder fellow menaces us, by the Prophet! Who will strike a blow for Islam, and help me to destroy this pet of the idolators?—may their mothers be defiled! Follow me!" And so saying, he urged his noble horse onwards.

The bull seeing himself pursued, turned for an instant with the intention of flight, but it was too late; as it turned, the spear of the Sultaun was buried in its side, and it staggered on, the blood pouring in torrents from the gaping wound, while it bellowed with pain. One or two of the attendants followed his example; and the Sultaun continued to plunge his weapon into the unresisting animal as fast as he could draw it out, until at last it fell, groaning heavily, having only run a few yards.

" Shabash, shabash! (Well done, well done!) who could have done that but the Sultaun? In-

shalla! he is the victorious—he is the slayer of man and beast!—he is the brave in war, and the skilful in hunting!" cried all the attendants and courtiers. But there were many others near, who vented their hate in silent yet bitter curses, —Brahmins, to whom the slaughter of the sacred animal was impiety not to be surpassed.

"Ha!" cried the Sultaun, looking upon the group, one of whom had disgust plainly marked upon his countenance, "ha! thou dost not like this. By the soul of Mahomed we will make thee like it! Seize me that fellow, Furashes!" he cried fiercely, "and smear his face with the bull's blood; that will teach him to look with an evil eye on his monarch's amusements."

The order was obeyed literally; and, ere the man knew what was said, he was seized by a number of the powerful attendants; his face was smeared with the warm blood, and some of it forced into his mouth.

"Enough!" cried the Sultaun, leaning back in his saddle as he watched the scene, and laughing immoderately pointed to the really ludicrous but disgusting appearance of the Brahmin, who, covered with blood and dirt, was

vainly striving to sputter forth the abomination which had been forced into his mouth, and to wipe the blood from his face. "Enough! bring him before us. Now make a lane in front, and give me a spear. Away with thee!" he cried to the Brahmin, "I will give thee a fair start; but if I overtake thee before yonder turning, thou art a dead man, by Alla!"

The man turned at once, and fled with the utmost speed that terror could lend him; the Sultaun waited awhile, then shouted his favourite cry of "Alla yar!" and, followed by his attendants, darted at full speed after the fugitive. The Brahmin, however, escaped down the narrow turning, and the brilliant party rode on, laughing heartily at their amusement.

Kasim watched all he saw with disgust; for, though a Mohamedan, and a sincere one, he had never heard of a sacred bull being destroyed; and there was somcthing so wanton and cruel in the act of its destruction, that it involuntarily brought to his memory the words of the young Englishman, and his character of the Sultaun. But he had not time for much reflection, for the

corps was once more in motion, and he became absorbed in admiration and wonder at all he saw —the extent and wealth of the bazaars—the crowds of people—the numbers of soldiers of gallant bearing—the elephants moving to and fro—and beyond all the Fort, the interior of which he now longed to see; but the Khan turned off to the left, having passed the town, and after riding a short distance they entered the camp without the walls, and halted within its precincts.

Leaving Kasim with his tents, which had arrived, and were being pitched for the accommodation of Ameena, the Khan, accompanied only by his servant Daood, rode into the Fort, to his own house, in order to break the news of his marriage to his wives, and to prepare them for their new associate. "There is sure to be a storm," he said, "and it may as well burst upon me at once."

Alighting therefore at the door, where he was welcomed affectionately by his servants, the news quickly spread through the house that the Khan was come. He only delayed while he washed his feet and face, to cleanse them from the dust of the road, as well as to refresh

himself a little ere he passed on into the zenana.

The two ladies, who had expected his arrival, and who had employed a person abroad to inform them of it, were sitting on a musnud smoking at one end of the room, with their backs to the door. As he entered, the gurgling of their hookas became doubly loud; a few slave girls were standing about the apartment, who made low salaams as he approached them; but the ladies neither rose nor took the slightest notice of him.

The Khan was surprised at seeing them together, as when he had left them they were bitter enemies, and he stopped suddenly in his approach. It was evident at once to him that they had heard of his marriage, and made common cause against him: he was justly enraged at this, and at the want of respect, nay insult, with which they now received him.

"Kummoo-bee! Hoormut-bee!" he cried; "women! do ye not see me? Where is your respect? How dare ye to sit as I approach? Am I a man, or am I less than a dog, that ye take no more notice of me than if I were a stone? Speak, ye ill-conditioned!"

"Ill-conditioned!" cried Kummoo-bee, who, though the youngest wife, was the worst-tempered, and who led the reply—"ill-conditioned! Alla, Alla! a man who has no shame—a man who is perjured—a man who is less than a man —a poor, pitiful, unblest coward! Yes," she exclaimed, her voice rising with her passion as she proceeded, "a namurd! a fellow who has not the spirit of a flea, to dare to come into the presence of women who, Inshalla! are daughters of men of family!—to dare to approach us, and tell us that he has come, and brought with him a vile woman—an unchaste—"

"Hold!" cried the Khan, roused to fury as the words fell on his ear, advancing and seizing a slipper which was on the ground; "dare to say that again, and I will beat thee!"

"Yes, beat us, beat us!" cried both breathlessly at once; "beat us, and our cup of shame will be full. Beat us, and you will do a valiant deed, and one that your new mistress will approve of," cried Hoormut.

"Alla, Alla! an old man, one with white hairs, to bring a new mistress to his wives' house! Shame, shame!" vociferated Kummoo.

"I tell thee, women, she is my wife!" roared the Khan. "Ye will receive her as such this evening; and cool your tempers in the meanwhile, or by Alla and the apostle I swear that I will send ye both to your relations, and they may keep ye or not, as they please, for I will not; so bethink ye what ye do; this is my house, and, Inshalla! I will be its master:" and so saying, and not waiting to hear any reply, he left the apartment.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was early in the fifth month after Herbert Compton had seen the shores of his native land grow dim in his aching sight, that the bold western coast of the peninsula of India met the earnest and watchful gaze of all who were assembled upon the deck of the noble vessel which bore them over the blue and sparkling sea.

All that day, before a fresh and lively breeze, the ship had careered onwards to her haven, dashing from her bows the white and hissing foam, which spread itself around her, and mingled in her wake; while, startled from their gambols in the deep, many a shoal of sprightly

flying-fish, rising from under the very bows, would take a long flight to leeward, and disappear within the limpid breast of their mother ocean.

Above, the sky was blue, and without a cloud to dim its brightness; and that pureness gave to the sea an intensity of colour which is unknown save where those cloudless skies exist. The fresh wind had curled the sea into graceful waves, which threw their white crests upwards to the sky as they broke, in seeming playfulness, or rejoicing in their gladness. Away through the glassy depths darted the gaudy dolphin and merry porpesse—now chasing each other with many an eager bound—now in a shoal together leaping far above the crystal billows, or appearing to reach the summits of the lucid waves, and, as they broke, sinking down to rest for an instant among their sparkling foam, only to renew the sport in endless variety upon others.

Scattered around them was the fleet—some vessels near, others far distant; some nearly buried under the load of canvas which was stretched

to court the wind—others, under a less quantity, gracefully surmounting every wave, and at times showing their brightly-coppered sides amongst the white foam in which they were encircled. They were like living beings, urging their way over the bright ocean; for at that distance no human form could be distinctly descried upon their decks, and their rapid progress seemed to be an act of their own gigantic power.

"Land! land on the lee bow!" was the joyful cry heard towards noon from the main-top-gallant cross-trees. "Land!" was re-echoed by all on deck, and each turned to congratulate his fellow-voyagers upon the happy news. Even as they looked, a wreath of white smoke burst from the side of the leading frigate, and mingled with the blue wave; while, with the report which followed, the joyful and long-looked-for signal of land flew to the mast-head, and was repeated by the fleet far and near.

Now every gaze was turned from the deck, and men looked with straining eyes to pierce the haze of the horizon, as if the land lay still above it; and soon there appeared a darker

blue outline of rugged form visible : for a while, to an unpractised eye, it was only that of a mist or distant cloud ; but it became gradually firmer and more decided, and ere an hour had elapsed there was no doubt that it was the land of their destination—the land in which many were to die—many to suffer privation and hardship, in war, in captivity, in weary sickness—from which few were destined to return, except with ruined health, bronzed features, and altered tempers from those which in youth and ardent hope they now bore with them.

Few, however, had thoughts of the future : the day was bright and joyful, and, as they neared the shore, it appeared to smile a welcome upon them. The naked precipices of the Ghâts reared themselves out of the dark and endless forests which the brilliant sun and soft warm atmosphere softened with tender tints ; and as many a one longed to roam far away among those recesses, little thought they how there lurked the demon of deadly fever, who would have smitten them with death had they ventured to intrude upon his solitary domain—solitary,

except to the wild elephant, the bison, the bear, and the serpent, which roamed unmolested everywhere, and shared it with him.

As they neared the coast, many a white sail of picturesque form could be seen gliding along it; others, issuing from little harbours and creeks, whose shores were clothed with groves of tall palm-trees, which all had heard of, but none as yet had seen. As the fleet was descried from the shore, little boats shot out, spreading their wide sails, and, as they neared the ships, became objects of intense interest. They would now first see a native of that noble land—a Hindoo, one who worshiped idols, whose faith and manners had been undisturbed for ages; while in the West had spread new faiths, new systems, where everything was daily advancing in civilization. Fearlessly did the tiny boat advance upon the ship, giving a signal for a rope; and as it was thrown, one of its dark-skinned crew leaped into the chains, and was on deck in an instant—an object of wonder and admiration to those who for the first time beheld him. Tall and finely formed, his figure was a model of symmetry—his eyes large and

lustrous—his features regular and amiable in expression—his body naked, except a white cloth around his loins, and a small cap upon his head, quilted in curious patterns.

He had brought fish, he said to those who, from having made a few voyages, had picked up some few words of his native tongue; and had a few plantains, some eggs and butter, vegetables of the country, and sour curds,—all delicious luxuries to those who had long been confined to the usual shipboard fare, with dry biscuit. Soon his stock was disposed of, and descending the side, the rope was cast off, and once more his little barque danced over the sparkling waves towards the shore.

They were yet far from Bombay; and as evening approached, the signal-gun and requisite flags warned the fleet to take in sail and stand out to some distance from the shore.

The sun went down in glory. As he descended, a few light clouds formed about him, and the wind dropped to a gentle whispering breeze, but just enough to fill the sails, and the fleet glided onwards in quietness.

As the sun sank, the heavens became one

mass of gold, almost too brilliant to look upon; and the clouds, tinged with reddish tints, could only be distinguished by the dazzling colours of their edges. At last it disappeared into a sea of waving, restless, molten gold; and as the waters gradually and lingeringly gave up their brightness, and the beams of light faded from the sails of the ships, the heavens became a mass of most gorgeous colours—crimson, and gold, and purple, fading into dim greenish yellows and tender violet tints on each side; which, as the mind strove to remember them for ever, and the eye to fix them there, but appeared for awhile, then faded away, and were no more seen.

Gradually but swiftly night clothed all objects in gloom, and the horizon and sky appeared to blend into one; except in the west, where, so long as light remained, its restless and every-varying form showed against the last lingering light of day. For awhile all watched the beauty of the heavens, spangled with brightly-gleaming stars, and fanned by a gentle and cool wind, which, blowing from the shore, brought with it, they fancied, perfumes

of flowers such as those with which they could imagine nature in her profusion had decked the land of which they had had a transient, yet exquisite glimpse. Then, one by one, they dropped the cheerful converse into which they had fallen in groups, and, as the night advanced, sunk into gentle slumbers, rocked by the easy motion of their vessel,—to dream of the glories which the coming morrow pictured to their excited imaginations ; or of a home, humble perhaps, but endeared by a thousand remembrances of love, of parental affection, of wanderings in cool and shady places, beside streams whose murmurings sounded gently in their ears.

Herbert's were thus. A feverish vision of palaces amidst gardens, where the graceful palm-tree and acacia waved over fountains which played unceasingly, and threw up a soft and almost noiseless spray into the air, and where he wandered amidst forms clad in such oriental garbs as his fancy supplied, gorgeous, and dazzling with gold and gems—gradually faded from him, and was succeeded by one of peaceful delight.

He seemed to wander once more with Amy,

amidst the green and mossy glades of Beechwood: again the well-known path beside the stream was threaded,—his arm was around her, and the familiar converse they had held sounded in his ears,—reply and question, even as they had uttered them together. He had drawn her closer and closer to him as they proceeded, and, as he strained her to his heart in one long and ardent embrace, he thought the murmur of the stream was louder, and he awoke:—it was only the ceaseless plash of the waters against the vessel's side, which came audibly to him through his open port-hole, and which at once dispelled the illusion.

But he composed himself again, to endeavour to recall the fleeting vision, to hear again the words of ideal converse, to hold in thrilling embrace the loved form which only then had been present with him. Vain and futile effort! and strange power of dreams, which enables us often to hold communings with those beloved—though thousands of miles intervene. How strongly does the mind in such moments supply the thoughts and words of two, amid scenes sometimes familiar, more often ideal, and yet

palpable in sleep, but dissipated by waking fancy, and often leaving no traces of their existence upon the memory but a confused phantasy, which imagination strives to embody in vain!

Herbert lay restless for awhile, and failing of his purpose, he roused himself, looked out over the waters which glistened faintly under the rays of a waning moon; and feeling the air to be fresh, as though it were near the dawn, he arose, dressed himself, and went on deck, in order to watch for the first break of morning over the land they were approaching.

The scattered ships had approached each other during the night, and stood on under easy sail; dreamy they looked,—even as giant spectres walking over the deep. There were some from whose white sails the moon's faint light was reflected, and which glistened under her beams. Others, dark and deeply in shadow, showing no token of the busy life which existed within, or the watchful care which guided them onwards.

Gradually a faint gleam shot up into the eastern sky, a paler colour than the deep blue which had previously existed; it increased, and

the lustre of the stars was dimmed. Soon, as all gazed to welcome it, a blush of pink succeeded; and as the day sprang into existence, the frigate's signal-gun boomed over the quiet sea. The joyous day grew into being rapidly: hues of golden, of crimson, flashed upwards, and spread themselves over the sky, revealing by degrees the long and broken line of mountains, which, in parts obscured by the mists floating upon them, and again clear and sharp against the brilliant sky, continued as far as the eye could reach from north to south. Light mists covered the coast and the foot of the mountains, and concealed both from their longing gaze; but as the sun arose in dazzling brilliancy, and the red blush of his morning beams rested upon the ships, the sea, the mountain peaks and naked precipices, the clouds seemed gradually to rise from their slumber, until, broken by his power, they floated upwards slowly, as if nature was purposely lifting her veil from the scene and revealing her beauties by degrees.

They were soon at the entrance of the harbour of Bombay. The islands which guard it

rose like fairy creations from the breast of ocean, wooded and smiling under the light of the sun. Away to their right were the noble range of Ghâts,—their peaked and broken summits presenting forms strange to eyes used only to the green and swelling eminences of verdant England; the grounds below them were covered with everlasting forests, and the shore lined by groves of palms, from among which peeped many a white temple with conical roof, or mosque with slender minarets. Before them stretched out the magnificent harbour, studded with bold and lofty islands, among which the mysterious Elephanta and gloomy Carinjah reared their giant forms and wooded sides, bounded by the town and fort of Bombay, which arose from the water's edge, and whose white and terraced houses and noble fortifications gleamed brightly in the sunlight.

Many a tall ship lay there, resting from her travel over the deep, and craft of every description shot here and there over the waters. An Arab dow, with her high and pointed stern, the pavilion upon it gaily painted—her decks

crowded with men clad in the loose robes and heavy turbans of Arabia, and her huge square sail set to catch the breeze—sailed near them. Many gaily-painted Pattamars, with their lateen sails as white as snow, mingled with the fleet; while others of smaller size could be seen stretching across the harbour from the Mahratta continent, bearing their daily supplies of market produce for the populous town.

It was a scene of novel yet exquisite beauty; and, lighted up by the powerful beams of an eastern sun, could not fail of making a lasting impression upon those who, after their weary voyage, saw their eastern home burst upon them in such splendour; nor was there one of all the numerous host contained in those vessels who could look upon it without feelings of mingled emotion.

From the General who commanded,—who, remembering the brilliant career which others had run, hoped in the coming wars to win fame and wealth,—to the lowest private, whose imagination revelled in fancied scenes of excitement far removed from his ordinary dull routine of duty, or of dissipation, which the cold

climate of England could not afford,—all were excited far beyond their usual wont; and exclamations of surprise, of wonder, or of gratification, as things new or beautiful or strange passed under their observation, arose from the various groups upon the deck.

Herbert Compton had left England without contracting a particular friendship for any of his brother officers; his close connexion and constant intercourse with his own family, and latterly his attachment, had prevented this; but he had not the less observed a cheerful and friendly intercourse with all. He was pained however to see how, during the voyage, and the constant and unrestricted intercourse of which the space of a vessel was naturally productive, many of them showed tempers and dispositions which debarred him from joining in such intimate association as their absence from home and residence in a foreign land ought to have engendered.

He was grieved to see also, how some gave themselves up to intemperance, as if to drown in wine the memory of things they should have held most dear;—how others betook them-

selves to cards or dice, to pass away the monotonous hours of their long voyage;—how these and other vices had already changed many whom he had at first been inclined to esteem sincerely, and forced him to contract gradually the association which he fain would have had intimate and general.

But there were nevertheless two with whom, though his intercourse had been slight at first, yet it had steadily progressed, and who returned his advances towards a sincere and unreserved friendship with corresponding warmth. One, Philip Dalton, was his equal in rank and slightly his senior in age, and in the regiment. The other, Charles Balfour, his ensign, a youth even younger than himself, a fair and sprightly fellow, whose joyous spirit nothing could daunt, and over whom care had not as yet flung even a shadow of her sobering mantle.

Dalton was grave and religious, it might be even tinctured with superstition, at least with a belief in destiny; and while his spirit recoiled at once from those thoughtless or vicious companions by whom he was surrounded, whom he shunned the more as he perceived the uncon-

trolled license they were prepared to give to their passions upon landing, and whose only conversation consisted in the prospects of indulgence which were opening upon them,—he soon grew into intimate association with Herbert, as well from a similarity of tastes and disgust of the others' wild revelry, as from seeing at once that he possessed a deep religious feeling, and gave expression to his sincere thoughts upon the subject, when it was openly ridiculed or sneered at among the others.

The three were standing in a group by themselves, and Herbert's busy and skilful pencil was rapidly sketching outlines of the mountains and views of the harbour as they successively presented themselves, with the new and curious forms of the boats and vessels around them.

"I envy you that talent, Herbert," said Dalton; "how valuable it would be to me, who feel that I shall so lack occupation that the time will often hang heavy on my hands; and how gratifying to those we love to send them even scraps of scenes in which we live and move!"

"Nay, Philip, you have never tried to use

your pencil; I would have given you fifty lessons while we have been on board, but you have never expressed the wish. Here is Charles, who is already a tolerable proficient, and who sketches with most meritorious perseverance."

"It is well for him, Herbert; it will help to keep him from vicious and corrupt society, and on his return to our dear England you will both have the pleasure of comparing your graphic notes, and talking over these beautiful scenes together. But with me it is different: I feel even now that yonder glorious land will be my grave, that the name of Philip Dalton will live only for awhile, and that some fatal shot or deadly fever will free me from this earthly existence."

"Nonsense, Philip!" cried both at once; "why should you be so gloomy amidst so bright and joyous a scene? As for me," continued Balfour, "I intend to defy bullet-shots and jungle-fevers, to become a major or a colonel at least, to serve my time out here, and then to go home and marry some one. I don't intend to get bilious or brown or ugly, but to keep my own tolerable looks for ten years at

all events. That bright land is an earnest to me of success; and as it now smiles upon us a hearty welcome, so do I feel my spirits rise within me proportionately. Why should I forbid them?"

"Ay, why should you, Charles?" said Dalton; "I would that mine were as light as yours, but they are not so, nor ever have been; and I am thankful too for this, for I have been led to think more deeply of serious matters than I otherwise should have done, and thus in some degree to prepare for the change which must soon come to me. Your career will, I hope, be very different, and I trust that your own bright hopes will be fulfilled; but remember, that though the sky and land are bright and fair, fairer than our England, yet death strikes many more of our race here than there, and that we have to encounter dangers in the field—active and brave enemies—so that we had need to be prepared whenever the blow comes, either by a shot upon the battle-field, or by the slower but equally fatal disease. Is it not so, Herbert?"

"It is, Philip; and yet I would not allow,

were I you, such dismal fantasies and thoughts to possess me. Surely, when God has thrown around us such beauties as these, our hearts should bid us rejoice, and enjoy them as they are sent, and we ought not to think gloomily upon the future, which may lead us insensibly into discontent and repining. Let us only continue this our unreserved and sincere friendship, whatever may be our position, and I feel confident that we possess in it the elements of much happiness, perhaps of mutual assistance in many difficulties."

"With all my heart and soul I promise it, Herbert," cried Dalton, and he was followed with equal enthusiasm by Balfour. "There will arise many adverse parties in the regiment, I foresee, but we need know none; singly, we might be obliged to belong to one or other—united, we may be thought singular, but we are safe, and I for one am ready to brave all obloquy on this score in your society."

"Then we are agreed, Philip," said Herbert; "if it be possible we will live together; it will take some time perhaps to arrange this, but if it can be done, are you willing?"

"Perfectly."

"And you, Charles?"

"Certainly; there is nothing I should like better than to be near you both always, for I feel that my wild spirits might lead me to do things in company with many of the rest, who are very pleasant fellows, that I should feel ashamed of afterwards."

"This is then a happy termination to our voyage," said Herbert; "one unlooked for at its commencement, one which already is a comfort to me; for I am assured that, whether we are safe in barracks or in the danger of service, in action or in sickness, we shall be much to one another, and that we shall have always some one near us in whom we can rely in any strait."

"I confess that many of my gloomy thoughts have passed away already," said Philip; "but let us for the present keep our own counsel, lest we be denounced as a party even before we go on shore. There, your sketch will do, Herbert, it is capital! And now put up your book, for I suspect we are not far from our anchorage, as the frigates are shortening sail; at any rate you should look about you."

They had sailed gradually on under the light morning breeze, which was fast falling, and hardly served to carry them to their resting-place; but still they moved, and thus the enjoyment they felt at the novelty of the scene around them was insensibly prolonged. The fleet had now all drawn together, and many greetings were exchanged between friends on board different vessels, who had been unavoidably separated during the voyage. The ships one by one shortened sail, and as they watched with anxiety the movements of the leading frigate, they heard at last the plash of her anchor as it plunged from her bows; simultaneously a wreath of smoke burst from her sides, and the first gun of her cheering salute awoke the echoes of the islands and shores of the harbour; ere it was finished her sails were furled, and she lay peacefully upon the smooth water, "a thing of life," seemingly enjoying rest after her long and ceaseless travel. Her consort followed her example—then the ships of the fleet in rotation; and the fort and vessels in the harbour saluted in return,—a joyful earnest of a hearty welcome.

Many a telescope was directed to the crowds

of people who lined the shores, the piers, and the fortifications, and many were the speculations upon their varied appearance and costumes. All, at that distance, appeared bright and clean and cheerful, and the inmates of the vessels longed fervently to set foot upon the land once more. As they anchored, each ship became surrounded by boats; and the shrill cries of vendors of fruit, vegetables, fresh bread, with eggs and other refreshments, resounded on all sides,—a din which almost bewildered them.

Their turn came to be visited by the staff-officers from shore; their men were paraded, and each company, headed by its officer, was inspected. · They were shocked by the appearance of their inspectors—sallow and pale—as if disease of the worst kind possessed them; they seemed more like men who had just arisen from their death-beds, than any in active performance of very onerous and fatiguing duties.

"To this must we come, you see, Charles," said Philip Dalton, as the staff-officer, having inspected his company and complimented him upon its appearance, passed on to another;

"pale faces, death-like looks, seem to be the lot of all here, who attain to blue coats, cocked hats and plumes. It was but just now that you said you *would* preserve yours, in spite of all climate; you see the result of time and hot weather better than I can tell you."

"I cannot bear to think of it," said Charles; "but surely all cannot be so, Philip? However, we shall see when we get ashore. When are we to land?"

"This evening, I believe; they are preparing our barracks for us; till then we must admire at a distance."

"More than we shall on shore, I dare say," said his companion, and so indeed it proved.

The landing in the close warm evening,—the march through the Fort over the dusty roads,—the aspect of the narrow streets and oddly-fashioned houses,—the heat, the flies, the smells of various kinds, some not the most fragrant,—particularly that of fish under the process of drying,—the discomfort of their first night on shore, passed in beds but ill adapted to defy the attacks of their bitter foes the musquitoes, completely dispelled all the romance

which they had hoped would be attendant on a landing in the gorgeous East, but which they discovered, with no small chagrin; existed only in their imaginations. All their beautiful gardens and gilded palaces, their luxurious couches and airy fountains, had passed away, and given place to the bare and dull reality of a barrack-room; not half so comfortable, they thought, as their old quarters in England, to which many of their thoughts wandered painfully.

END OF VOL. I.

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